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Victor Hugo

UNESCO ARCHIVES

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A window open on the world

Editorial

A hundred years after his death, the time seems ripe to attempt to fathom the depths of Hugo "the man-ocean", to examine his work with a more dispassionate eye and to bring to light the essential unity of the immense universe of a poet who once described himself, with more than a touch of self-mocking humour, as "the Gargantua of things beautiful".

Although Victor Hugo remains, at least in France, part of the collective memory, he is increasingly remembered in a fragmentary, foreshortened way. The extraordinary activity and interest aroused by the celebration of his centenary is evidence that he has lost none of his force and vitality. Yet, paradoxically, he remains both a poorly-known and a controversial figure.

The very size of his work, whose restless tentacles reach out in every direction, mask from our view both its central core and its overall scope. Each of us sees him in terms of one or other of the stereotyped, almost legendary images of him that, not without some prompting by the poet himself, have successively been projected—the bourgeois poet, the libertarian humanist popularized by the Third Republic, the grandiloquent sage, the bearded, faun-like grandfather.

Today such simplistic selectivity is no longer possible. With each passing year a clearer outline of the vast Hugolian continent gradually emerges and we begin to perceive the unifying purpose that presided over its creation; "Poetry", wrote Hugo, "is Virtue", the all-encompassing truth, and it is this sense of a coherent, irreducible totality that provides the vital key.

We salute the man who was both a part of the history of his century and of the future, who denounced the death penalty and fought for the rights of man and for the oppressed. Now, too, we appreciate the full scope of his graphic art and recognize the artist in the writer and the writer in the artist.

It yet remains for us discover Hugo the poet. Looking beyond ideological and aesthetic prejudices and reservations, we have to seek out the inspired virtuoso of the word, one of the greatest because one of those to whom we feel most close. He it was who knew how to conjure up "the voice of the shadows", the medium who liberated the subconscious of language; and to this extent he is "modern". But in his dazzling use of everyday language he is also that "*force qui va*", that driving force, that questioning, ever-hopeful breath of life that spans the centuries.

COVER: *Château sur un Lac,* (Castle on a Lake) by Victor Hugo, 1857, pen and ink, wash-tint and gouache. Photo taken from *Victor Hugo, Dessins et Lavis*, by Jacqueline Lafargue © Editions Hervas, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris.* We wish to express our gratitude to Monsieur Jean Hervas of Hervas publishers, for his generosity in allowing us to use films of the colour photos appearing in his admirable selection of Hugo's drawings. All our colour photos, including the cover, have been taken from this work.

Page 2: *Portrait de Victor Hugo*, by Victor Mottez, around 1846. Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo.*

Page 39: *Victor Hugo*, by Auguste Rodin, 1885, dry-point engraving. Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo.*

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38th year

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Octopus with the initials V.H. A drawing by Victor Hugo (c. 1865).

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A 'modern' poet?

by Jean Gaudon

THE notion of "modernity" has lost much of its usefulness as a critical tool and should perhaps be discarded altogether on the grounds that it has now come to serve merely as a prop for misguided literary dogmatism or as a means of disguising intractable difficulties of reasoning. Baudelaire, who set himself up as the champion of modernity, based his attitude on a paradox. For him modernity involved the cultivation of a "transitory and fleeting element" in order to avoid lapsing into the "emptiness of abstract and indefinable beauty". In electing to define what he meant by modernity in an essay he wrote on a water-colourist, Constantin Guys, who dealt with transitory and modish objects, Baudelaire adopted a thematic standpoint or, to use an old-fashioned term, the standpoint of the subject-matter.

I doubt whether this approach is in any way adequate for the study of Victor Hugo. From a very early stage, in his theoretical writings, he had already gone beyond the terms of that dilemma by staying away from thematic considerations. I do not know whether he had pondered over the famous line by André Chenier: *"Sur des pensers nouveaux faisons des vers antiques"* (Let us write poetry in the old style, but let the thoughts be new), which implied that poetry is nothing but an ornament, like icing on a cake. My guess is that he had and that he may have been thinking about this distinction, which for him was devoid of meaning, when, in 1833, in an article published in the magazine *L'Europe Littéraire*, he declared: *"Une idée n'a jamais qu'une forme, qui lui est propre"* (An idea never has more than one specific form), before going on to say: *"Aussi tout art qui veut vivre doit-il se poser à lui-même les questions de forme, de langue et de style, dans toutes les circonstances"* (Thus, any art that is intent on survival has to ask itself about questions of form, language and style, whatever the circumstances).

The right to be able to leave nothing unsaid, in verse and prose alike, is, in Hugo's view, the only genuine manifestation of modernity and is inseparable from considerations of form. The poet can belong to his age only by improving the tool at his disposal, that is, the language of the nineteenth century, which Hugo described as being *"forgée pour tous les accidents de la pensée"* (forged to deal with all the irregularities of thought) and which he came close to regarding as being forged by those same irregularities for, as he said, ideas are the *"vraies et souveraines faiseuses de langues"* (the real and supreme coiners of language). The poet's venture is a philosophical, linguistic and prosodic one whose different parts are all closely intertwined.

The link between literary revolution and political revolution which Hugo established as early as 1830 cannot be explained away by considerations of political opportunity, and his poem *Réponse à un Acte d'Accusation* (Answer to an Indictment), in *Contemplations*, has to be taken literally. When Hugo wrote: *"Je déclarai les mots égaux, libres, majeurs"* (I decreed that all words were equal, free and adult), he broke with the tradition whereby poetic language was considered as being a specialized form of language among various other technical languages. Poetry was, for him, as free and sovereign as the people themselves. It was no longer subject to ancient writ or to customary law and was free to demand its share of the cultural heritage and at the same time to seize the opportunities created by chance. Thus the poet again became "that man by whom the offence cometh". This was an intolerable provocation. At the same time as the Word took on a sacred character—the myth of the poet as seer is central to Hugo's system—poetry seemed to lose its sacred aura.

This deconsecration of poetry, which is indissociable from Hugo's political attitude, is particularly noticeable in the broadening of his vocabulary which is often chosen for its scandal value. It is a systematic affront to good taste. By using the language of the gambling den, the brothel and the gutter as a source of metaphors with which to stigmatize Napoleon III and his henchmen, Hugo called upon the entire contemporary scene, summoned all the facets of reality, and merged action and dreams in a single cluster. His deliberate stylistic incongruities enabled him to speak in scandalous terms of what he felt to be scandalous. The poetry of *Châtiments* has the revolutionary force of something that is utterly strange and unexpected and is all the more effective in that the traditional academic approach to political satire had

The life and times of

by Evelyn Blewer

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Bibliothèque Nationale*

The house in which Victor Hugo was born, in Besançon, capital of the Franche-Comté region, eastern France.

1802. Victor-Marie Hugo, third son of Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo, a senior officer in the French army, and Sophie Trébuchet, was born at Besançon on 26 February. His two elder brothers, Abel and Eugène, were aged four and two respectively.

1803-1814. Spent his childhood in Paris, apart from short periods on the isle of Elba and in Naples and Madrid, where his father had been posted. Started school in the summer of 1804. In 1809, became the pupil of de La Rivière, a defrocked priest. In 1811, during a nine-month stay in Madrid, was a boarder at the "College of the Nobles" (San Antonio). During this period the already strained relations between his parents grew considerably worse and ultimately led to a judicial separation.

1815. Hugo was sent to live in a boarding house. Began to write his *Cahier de Vers Français* (Notebook of French Verse).

1816. Continued to live in the same boarding house, while studying at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand. Tried his hand at translating Virgil's poetry and completed *Irtamène*, a tragedy in five acts.

1817. At the age of fifteen, entered a poem in the French Academy's competition on the "pleasure derived from study in all walks of life". Did not win a prize, but was cited by the Secretary of the Academy in his report. Wrote a light comedy entitled *A Quelque Chose Hasard Est Bon* (Chance Can Be a Good Thing) and two acts of a tragedy, *Athélie ou les Scandinaves*. His brother Eugène began to show signs of mental illness.

Planet-Eye, a smudged black ink and pencil drawing by Victor Hugo. It evokes these lines from* Les Mages*, a poem Hugo wrote around 1854, when he produced the drawing:

"The eye of the star in the light,
And the eye of the monster in the night!"

Photo © Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Département des Manuscrits

set artificial lexical limitations to what could be expressed.

Plunging into the contemporary fray is no more a poetic act than any other. It meant something to Hugo only in so far as it formed part of a scheme of things that transcended it in every respect and permitted the inclusion of the whole of mankind's past as well as its relationship with elemental forces and its dreams for the future. The epic, as a literary form in which the literal and figurative meanings are traditionally combined, where history becomes myth and myth history, is the realization of that aim. It is consistent with the desire to achieve the *magnum opus* that is all-encompassing and with realization of its negative corollary, the impossibility of ever achieving such poetry. *La Légende des Siècles*, *Dieu*, and *La Fin de Satan*, three poems which Hugo left unfinished and in which the formal discipline of the poetic line is constantly challenged by the temptation to explore the potentialities of informal language, can be regarded as the marks not so much of failure as of a symbolic and unconscious decision not to complete them.

In the *Réponse à un Acte d'Accusation*, a revolutionary poet leaps on to the *"borne d'Aristote"* to harangue the crowd. (Here the word *"borne"* has two meanings: a stone used as a fender to protect the base of a wall or a gateway from being damaged by the wheels of carriages; and, a boundary stone. The allusion is to the revolutionary poet Camille Desmoulins who, on 12 July 1789 climbed on a *"borne"*—in the first sense— ▶

Victor Hugo 1802-1885

1818. Hugo completed his secondary schooling and left the boarding house to live with his mother. He wrote an initial version of *Bug-Jargal*, a romantic account of the revolt of the black population on the Island of Hispaniola. The main character, who is a slave and the leader of the insurrection, saves the life of a white benefactor, whom he calls his "brother", and sacrifices his life to save ten black hostages. He is the first servant of his fellow-men to feature in Hugo's romantic work.

1819. Awared two prizes by the *Académie des Jeux Floraux* of Toulouse. Founded, together with his brothers, a review, *Le Conservateur Littéraire*, of which he was the leading contributor for thirty issues. Published, in booklet form, the ode *Destins de la Vendée*. This, his first published work, was to give rise to a sharp controversy among the critics. Indeed, all Hugo's works were to be violently disputed or defended to varying degrees.

In 1820 Hugo paid a visit to Chateaubriand and it was on this occasion that the famous French author and diplomat is said to have dubbed him "enfant sublime" (sublime child). This drawing of Hugo by Eugène Legénissei, which dates from 1819, captures the young poet's air of precocious genius.

1820. Hugo engaged in a secret correspondence with Adèle Foucher, a childhood friend who was not acceptable to his mother. The assassination of the nephew and heir presumptive of Louis XVIII inspired Hugo to write his ode *Sur la Mort du Duc de Berry*, which he published in booklet form and in recognition of which the King made him an *ex-gratia* payment of 500 francs. *Bug-Jargal* was serialized in *Le Conservateur Littéraire*.

1821. Hugo began to collect material for a novel, *Han d'Islande*. He published, in booklet

Photo © *Musées de la Ville de Paris*, SPADEM, 1985

form, his ode *Le Baptême du Duc de Bordeaux*, son of the Duc de Berry and known as the "child born of a miracle". The poet's mother, Sophie Trébuchet, died after a long illness.

Life and Times of V. H.

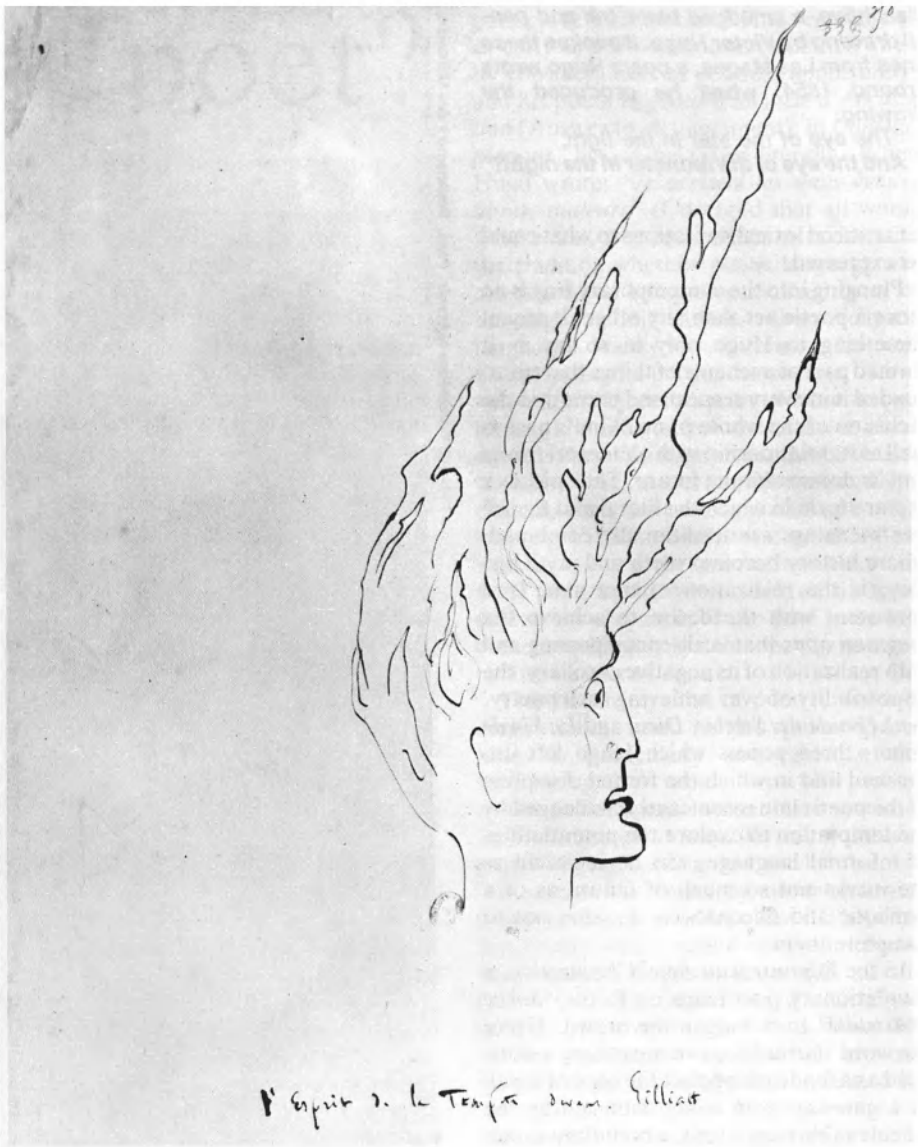
1822. Hugo published his first collection of verse, *Odes et Poésies Diverses.* The royal household granted him a pension of 1,000 francs and, with this income, he was able to marry Adèle Foucher on 12 October. Eugène Hugo's mental condition suddenly took a turn for the worse. *Inez de Castro*, a melodrama in three acts, probably written in 1819-1820, was accepted by the *Théâtre du Panorama Dramatique*, but was not performed.

1823. Publication of *Han d'Islande*, a sombre novel in which the love interest is paralleled by the account of the frightful acts perpetrated by Han, a monster whose only redeeming feature is the affection he shows as a father. Eugène went uncontrollably insane and had to be committed to an asylum. Hugo was granted a pension of 2,000 francs by the Ministry of the Interior. In July, Adèle gave birth to a son, Léopold-Victor, but the child died three months later.

1824. In January, *La Muse Française* published *La Bande Noire*, an ode defending ancient French archaeological treasures that were threatened with destruction. Published again in March in a collection of new odes, *La Bande Noire* marked the emergence of Hugo as an "antiquarian" or lover of antiquities. Birth of Léopoldine, Hugo's first daughter.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Portrait of Adèle Foucher, perhaps by herself, dating from about 1820. She married Hugo in 1822.



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The Spirit of the Storm before Gilliatt. ***This pen and brown ink drawing by Victor Hugo, with a caption in his own hand, appears in the manuscript of his novel*** **Les Travailleurs de la Mer** ***(1866) and evokes an incident in it. The novel's title was originally intended to be*** **Gilliatt le Marin** ***("Gilliatt the Sailor"), from the name of its hero.***

▶to address the people). I do not know whether Hugo had studied Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, but it is not necessary to have first-hand knowledge of that work to realize that Aristotelian doctrine is based entirely on a quantitative system. The orator's discourse, and to a greater degree that of the poet, differ from ordinary discourse in that they contain what might be termed "guarded transgressions of language" which can be quantified. In the case of Victor Hugo, the fact that he felt bound to leave nothing unsaid was scarcely compatible with such constraints and limitations. The link he established between "form" and "substance" entailed evolving a new rhetorical system that made it possible to liberalize verbal transgression rather than altering or bending the body of doctrine to which French neo-classical poetry conformed. From as early as 1834, in his references to Mirabeau, Hugo had outlined a theory of poetic licence which had nothing in common with Boileau's *"beau désordre"* (fine disorder). Aristotle was caught out at his own game, as it were, since it was for the sake of *mimesis* that Hugo disregarded the traditional rhetorical precepts: "Without it being our wish, in the words we have just written to describe this man's (Mirabeau's) extraordinary eloquence, we have depicted him by the very disorder of our images."

The use of the word "images" is important in that it lays emphasis on one of the keys to the poetic revolution, and it is rather significant that it should have occurred in a text in prose describing its own creative process. The image is not just one more stylistic device which, in the view of the Aristotelians, should be handled with moderation; it is rather the chosen weapon of poetry, whether it be in a prose work like *Les Misérables* or in a collection of verse like *Les Contemplations*. Hugo's rhetoric, however, cannot be reduced to an emphasis put on metaphors. Its reliance on tropes of *similarity* (comparison, metaphor, symbol, etc.), which aim at producing a unified vision of the universe, verbally translated in closed, finite forms, is complemented and sometimes contradicted by an even stronger tendency to use figures of *contiguity*, which have the opposite effect of creating an impression of infinitude and of opening up the sentence. His favourite figure is accumulation (as opposed to enumeration, which implies the existence of a closed series, like the seasons or the Olympian gods). The *"entassement"* (piling up) that makes up the *"mur des siècles"* (wall of the centuries), as

well as the more abstract concept of infinite progression towards the absolute are stylistically expressed by long, distended, unbalanced sentences which shatter the normal syntactical patterns.

From the standpoint of a *mimesis* of infinite movement towards an unattainable truth, the distinction made between verse and prose has little meaning, firstly because the prose may be poetic, but also because the quality of the poetry may no longer be attached to a particular kind of diction. Although there is no lack of "beautiful" lines in Hugo's poetic work, for he was the master of the striking opening, the unforgettable ending and of alliterative and rhythmic skills, he seldom set out to achieve maximum "poeticity". *Booz Endormi*, his perfect poem, is atypical in this respect. Flatness of expression is neither an inadvertence nor a sign of inability, but it is one of the key features of his poetic strategy. For Hugo, like Baudelaire, whom critics picture, without reason, as the champion of "pure poetry", the poetic discourse is neither an unbroken song nor the juxtaposition of a series of precious gems. It is more in the nature of a trajectory consisting of alternating highs and lows, variations in the range of syntax and rhythm and differences in levels of intensity. Verse is therefore not a pertinent unity but a vector conveying the poetic current and relating to the entire network to which it belongs.

Can it be said that Hugo's rhetoric goes hand in hand, "involuntarily", with a logical system that is also anti-Aristotelian? It might be useful, in this respect, to examine the role played in the poetic process by what is known as antithesis. Hugo's obsession with antithesis has been exposed to ridicule without it having been realized that many contrasting terms were not traditional antitheses, contrasting, separating or classifying opposite notions, but disguised or straightforward oxymorons. In other words they are figures of speech whose function it is to combine or merge into one another ideas or objects that logic, or even nature, keep separate. An example of this can be seen in the line *"Ténèbres et rayons affirment à la fois..."* (Darkness and beams of light assert at the same time...), from the poem *Voyage de Nuit*, in *Contemplations*. The phrase "at the same time" is perhaps the key to a poetics that is intent on describing the "irregularities" of thought. By upsetting the system governing the polarization of ideas that would culminate in an antithetical, Manichaean universe it makes it possible to launch a head-on attack on the principle of contradiction by introducing a logical and chronological simultaneity.

Hugo is a difficult writer. A model pupil turned virtuoso, he is also a complex and disconcerting poet who often strays from the habits of conventional Western thinking. Even though certain individual features of his work can be identified with recognizable aspects of the French cultural tradition, his approach can still be said to be revolutionary, because it is completely coherent, with a consistency that is really his own.

In *A Celle qui est Restée en France*, the last poem in *Contemplations*, Hugo wrote: ▶

Life and Times of V. H.

1825. Hugo started work on a play on Corneille, but was to abandon it. Promoted "chevalier" of the Legion of Honour, being cited for "the noble efforts which he has constantly deployed in support of the sacred cause of the church and the monarchy." Accompanied Charles Nodier and two other friends to Rheims for the coronation of Charles X. His ode *Sur le Sacre de Charles X* was to enjoy considerable success in official circles and he was granted an allowance to cover his travelling expenses. In the summer, Hugo, together with his wife and daughter and Nodier and his wife, undertook a journey to the Alps. On his return, he wrote an essay on *The Destruction of Monuments in France*, in which he called for the adoption of a law for the preservation of monuments threatened with demolition or excessive "restoration".

1826. Hugo published a significantly expanded version of *Bug-Jargal*. He started work on a play on *Cromwell* and published *Odes et Ballades*, a collection of verse written between June 1824 and October 1825. Birth of a son, Charles.

1827. Hugo resumed work on the play *Amy Robsart*, which he had drafted in outline in 1822, and proposed it to the *Théâtre de l'Odéon* as being the work of his young brother-in-law, Paul Foucher. Hugo accompanied the sculptor David D'Angers to the Bicêtre prison to see convicts being put in irons. He used the observations he made on that occasion to write *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné* (The Last Day of a Condemned Man) and *Les Misérables*. He completed his work on *Cromwell* and published it with its celebrated preface. This literary manifesto traced the history of poetry back through the ages and called for the emancipation of drama from the ancient rules. It established Hugo as the leader of the "new school". The critics of this time, who were particularly aware of the issues involved, detected in *Cromwell* and in the ode *A la Colonne de la Place Vendôme* which was published in February of that year, the signs of a very clear-cut political change. Indeed, it is from 1827 that Hugo can be said to have departed from the stand he took in his early youth and to have become, once and for all, conscious of certain guiding principles from which he was never again to stray.

The house in the* Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, *Paris, in which Hugo lived from 1827-1830.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

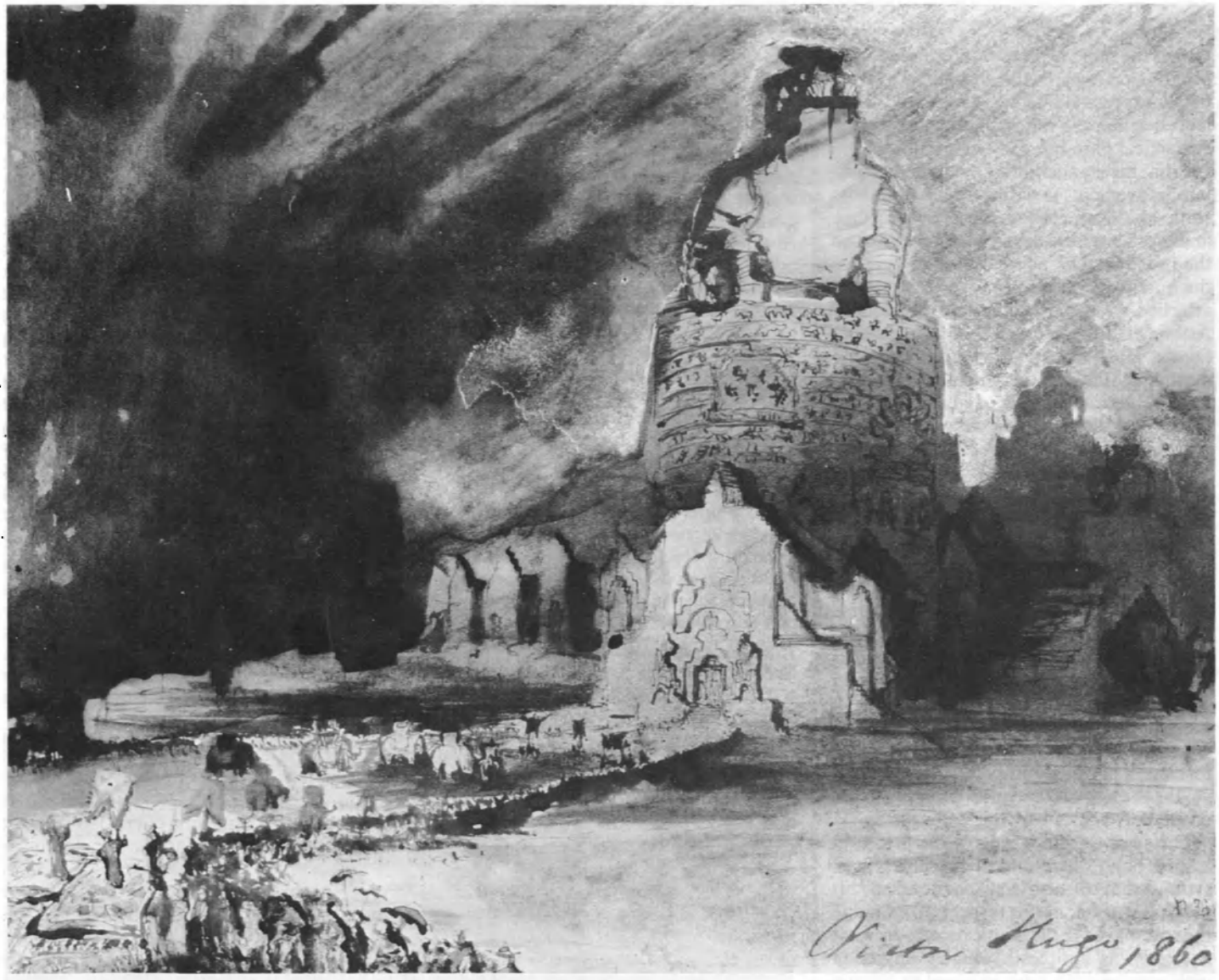

Photo © Musées de la Ville de Paris-SPADEM, 1985

Drawing by Victor Hugo entitled "La Légende des Siècles" (1860). The first edition of the collection of Hugo's poems bearing this title appeared in 1859.

▶ *"Deviens le grand œil fixe ouvert sur le grand Tout"* (Become the great unwinking eye fixed on the great Whole). Underlying this call for visionary poetry we seem to recognize a call for the invention of a new rhetorical order. The "Whole", which is situated both within historical time and beyond it, imposes a poetics of the trajectory rather than of the object. The act of creation becomes a means of describing the movement towards an *"au-delà"*, a "beyond", that is destined to remain forever devoid of positive substance. I see no objection to this being called "modernity". Dante and Shakespeare are also modern. All things considered, such a definition of modernity would help us describe the literary phenomenon more effectively than the frills and flounces of Constantin Guys. It would also enable us to discover Victor Hugo and to situate him in his true place, the *"région des égaux"* (the region of equals), as he describes it in his great book *William Shakespeare.* ■

JEAN GAUDON, *French critic and novelist, has taught French literature at the universities of Manchester, London, Yale and Paris. He has published many studies on Victor Hugo and the 19th century including,* Victor Hugo et le Théâtre *(1955, re-issued 1985), and* Victor Hugo et le Temps de la Contemplation *(1969, re-issued 1985). He has also written several novels and narratives including,* L'Embarras Incertain, ou le Hollandais *(1976),* Une Passion en Bavière *(1980) and* D Comme Descartes *(1979).*

Life and Times of V. H.

1828. Death of Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo, the poet's father. The first and only performance of *Amy Robsart*, which was a failure. In the press, Hugo claimed responsibility for those passages which had been the most loudly hissed in the play attributed to Foucher. Publication of the definitive edition of *Odes et Ballades* containing the poems having appeared in the first edition, plus a number of others. Hugo started to take notes for *Notre-Dame de Paris* and wrote virtually all the poems contained in *Les Orientales.* Birth of his second son, François-Victor Hugo.

1829. Publication of *Les Orientales* in January while, in *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*, Hugo launched his first attack on capital punishment. Wrote the play *Marion de Lorme*, which was accepted by the *Comédie Française*, but was immediately banned by the censor. According to a letter from Sainte-Beuve to Lamartine, Hugo was "offered all manner of compensation and, in particular, a political post at the Council of State and a place in the administration." He was also offered a significant increase in his royal pension. However, he proudly resisted these attempts to buy him off and set to work on a new play, *Hernani, ou l'Honneur Castillan. Hernani* was completed and was accepted by the *Comédie Française* and authorized by the censor, who commented: "It is a good thing for the public to see to what lengths the human mind can stray when it is set free from all rules."

Photo © The City of Paris Victor Hugo Exhibition, 1985

Victor Hugo in 1829, by his close friend the painter and engraver Achille Devéria (1800-1857).

A novelist and his century

by Victor Brombert

VICTOR Hugo prided himself on having been born with his century. 1802: *"Ce siècle avait deux ans..."* (This century was two years old...) Every French schoolchild can quote the opening line of *Les Feuilles d'Automne*, a line which is echoed in the concluding piece where Hugo sees himself as the son of his epoch. *"Je suis fils de ce siècle"* (I am a son of this century). Son—or is it father? Hugo's historical self-dramatization is not merely an expression of solidarity with the events and the destiny of his own post-revolutionary period; it is rooted in the early belief that the truly exceptional writer's vocation is to represent his century and fill it with his presence.

It obviously suited Hugo's imagination to think in terms of huge chunks of time, and to conceive of a *siècle* as a living reality. *La Légende des Siècles* is his epic account of humanity's adventure through history. He saw a century as a massive unit with a life and a personality of its own. Conversely, he felt that great personalities embodied their time. Hugo, so fond of double-substantive metaphors, glorified the *homme siècle.* In his dithyrambic essay *William Shakespeare*, he affirms that every epoch is concentrated (*condensée*) in one figure. When that figure disappears, the epoch has come to an end. His own fiction provides any number of illustrations of characters who, in a less exalted fashion, embody an entire century, or are its anachronistic survivors.

Hugo's association of a human figure with an entire century has of course specific relevance to his conception of himself as writer. There exists a link in the larger design of the Book of Time: from Dante to Shakespeare, to Pascal, to Voltaire, to the advent of a new age ushered in by the Revolution. Hence Hugo's very special and self-glorifying view of himself in *William Shakespeare:* as the poet of the nineteenth century, he faces the poet of the sixteenth century, as the poet of France he faces the poet of England; but above all, as the supreme French writer of the immediate post-Revolutionary world, he is the poet of that new world: the vatic, visionary thinker and mythmaker of a radically new era.

Put in those terms, Hugo's notion of himself associates by an inner logic his literary vocation and presence-in-the-world to political upheavals and social change. The nineteenth century, according to him, is without precedent: it corresponds to the personal quest for originality. Like any true work of genius, it is the offspring of an idea. And that idea—the Revolution—is in his terms the grand climacteric (*"le tournant climatérique"*) of humanity, the turning point in a providential scheme. Artistic creation, historical becoming, and political commitment, thus seem destined to exist in a state of symbiosis.

It is hardly surprising that, in Hugo's view, the thinker's or artist's function is not so much to glorify the notion of the democratic *peuple*, as to create it. The belief in the possibility of projecting through art the as yet unshaped but potentially powerful figure of the common people remained a constant feature of Hugo's thought. He seems to have been convinced from his earliest years that this was the specific mission of the writer.

The nineteenth-century playwright, novelist, or poet (Hugo was all three) had to create his audience, and such an act of creation had undeniable political implications. As he puts it in *William Shakespeare*, a text which in more ways than one is a profession of faith, "the masses become the audience, which in turn becomes the people." The prime mission of creative intellect is to transfigure the masses, to metamorphose the mob: *"construire le peuple."* And *peuple* is of course one of the most ideologically loaded terms of the century, and one of the pivotal words in Hugo's lexicon.

A concern with the deep social issues of ▶

1830. Publication in booklet form of the set of poems entitled *L'Aumône*, which was sold in aid of poor workers and the jobless in Normandy. The collected poems of Charles Dovalle, a young poet killed in a duel, were published with a preface by Hugo in the form of a letter, in which he defined romanticism as literary liberalism in the following terms: "Freedom in art and society is the twofold goal towards which all rational and logical minds should strive in a single forward movement." *Hernani* was performed for the first time on 25 February, marking the beginning of a four-month "battle" at the Comédie Française between "classicals" and "romantics". Adèle, Hugo's fourth child, was born in the very middle of the "Three Glorious Days". Hugo settled down to writing *Notre-Dame de Paris*, on which he was to work without interruption for the remainder of the year.

1831. Publication of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, a novel about Paris in the year 1482. Through the adventures of a young gypsy girl, an apostate priest and a hunchback with a heart of gold, Hugo exalted the civilization of the fifteenth century, condemned torture and capital punishment and popularized a certain image of the Middle Ages. The government of Louis-Philippe commissioned Hugo to write a *Hymn* commemorating the "July days," [the Revolution of 1830]. This was put to music by Hérold and was sung by a choir at the ceremony held at the Panthéon in Paris on 28 July. The play *Marion de Lorme* was at last released from censorship, which had been abolished following the July Revolution, and was performed at the Theatre of the Porte Saint Martin before being published. Les *Feuilles d'Automne*, which had been written between July 1828 and November 1831, was also published. In its preface, Hugo said that the collection of verse did not have any political significance and asked: "Is there any reason why art should not forge ahead, just because the earth shakes?"

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. Adolphe Jullien Collection

Esmeralda and Quasimodo in one of the towers of Notre-Dame, *a drawing by the French writer Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) illustrating a scene from Hugo's novel* Notre-Dame de Paris.

▶ the nineteenth century is obvious in all his novels, even in the ones which do not seem to be political in nature. *Bug-Jargal* deals with the 1791 slave revolt in what was to become the Republic of Haiti, and is filled with echoes of the French Revolution. The violence of the insurrection is related to the fall of the Bastille, as political forces seem to take precedence over individual destinies. Hugo's career as novelist begins under the sign of the *fatum* of history. Political forces will continue to determine the thrust of his fiction. The barricades and the street fighting of the early 1830s, in the wake of the July Revolution, are the backdrop to the most dramatic episodes in *Les Misérables*. Even more significant is the insistent recall of the battle of Waterloo, seen at the same time as the end of a world, a return to the past, and a new beginning—in other words, as a major, yet problematic turning point in the destiny of Europe.

Les Travailleurs de la Mer, even though focused on man's epic struggle against oceanic forces, is filled with allusions to contemporary history. Captain Lethierry launches his steamboat on a fourteenth of July. A revolutionist in navigation, the old skipper is in fact known as *l'homme révolution*, and prides himself on having been "suckled by '89" (*"J'ai tété '89"*). Topical allusions to the world of the Restauration (the fall of Villèle, the death of Pope Leo XII, the arms sales to the Tsar for the repression of Poland) are constant reminders that this allegorical saga, filled with monsters and archetypal figures, is rooted in history.

Needless to comment on the historical and political focus of *Quatrevingt-Treize*; the very title points to the climactic year 1793, the year of the Terror and the reign of the guillotine. Even in those works not overtly concerned with nineteenth-century politics, the implicit references are powerful. The background to *Han d'Islande* is a large-scale revolt by mutinous miners. *Notre-Dame de Paris*, though historically situated in 1482, is filled with anachronistic or prophetic allusions to the French Revolution; it describes a world of transition and change that corresponds, in Hugo's mind, to the transitional nature of the early days of Louis-Philippe's regime. But if the end of the feudal world in *Notre-Dame de Paris* is understood to coincide with the invention of the printing press (the Book was to replace the Cathedral), there was also nostalgia for bygone structures and values; and this historical duplicity (looking forward and feeling backward) is projected in the key chapter *"Ceci tuera cela."* *L'Homme qui Rit* displays a similar political ambiguity. It too talks about the past (seventeenth-and eighteenth-century England) while constantly referring to the narrator/reader's present. The story of the grimacing human monster—a victim of royal absolutism, but himself (without knowing it) a born nobleman—points to the end of the aristocratic era.

Anachronism is provocatively inscribed into the glorification of the nineteenth century. In *Les Misérables*, Hugo calls it the *"grand siècle"* (a polemical expression, since these two words are traditionally associated with the reign of Louis XIV) and he refers to the dawn of new ideas as a vast *"lever d'idées"*—an ironic image which at the same time recalls and discredits the despotic ceremonial at Versailles. But Hugo did not wait to sing the glories of the post-Revolutionary age until the period of political exile when, converted to Republican ideals, he saw himself increasingly as the inspired yet troubled apologist of revolution. As early as 1834, in an essay on Mirabeau through whom he self-revealingly projects the image of the "predestined" genius, Hugo extols the men of the Revolution as the heralds of the whirlpool of ideas known as the nineteenth century. And in the acceptance speech at the *Académie Française* (1841), the link between the Revolution and the nineteenth century is made even clearer. After glorifying Napoleon as the providential child of the Revolution capable of transforming history into an epic, Hugo proclaims his allegiance to his own time (*"j'aime mon temps"*)—even if this time implies upheavals and violence.

But there is a flagrant paradox in Hugo's notion of *le grand siècle*, for this notion appears to straddle two potentially incompatible fields of action: politics and literature. Ideologies can lead to political deeds (good and bad), and writing can of course be a form of political action. But writing and ideas can also be action in and by themselves. Political immanence and intellectual transcendence are not necessarily attuned to each other. In the concluding section of *Le Rhin*, Hugo attributes modern France's greatness to its *clergé littéraire*. The institution of Literature is exalted as a spiritual power.

Hugo in fact develops a revolutionary ideology all of his own. The saga and aspirations of the French Revolution are read into the lines of a new providential text that sings the adventure of the human spirit and the prowess of the creative mind. Genius is to take precedence over the hero, the pen is to vanquish the sword. Thought is power. The defeat of Waterloo is seen, in *Les Misérables*, as a major shift in the moral and intellectual perspective. The sword-wielders, the *sabreurs*, have had their day; the time of the thinkers has come. *William Shakespeare*, this paean about the nature and destiny of genius, proclaims the demise of the warrior-hero, the entrance of the true

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1832. Hugo wrote a new preface to the fifth edition of the *Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*, in which he argued that, along with the abolition of capital punishment, it would be necessary to institute a penalty based on charity rather than on anger, in a bid to build a humanitarian society. *Guerre aux Démolisseurs!* a vigorous attack on the destruction of ancient monuments, was published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Publication of the definitive edition of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, with a foreword and three additional chapters. On 5 June, Hugo was witness to the republican insurrection in Paris following the funeral of General Lamarque, and it was this event that was to stand at the centre of his novel *Les Misérables*. Hugo also wrote two plays, *Le Roi s'Amuse* and *Lucrèce Borgia*. Rehearsals for the first started at the *Comédie Française* at the end of the summer and it was performed on 22 November. However, it was taken off on 23 November because the government thought it saw an uncomplimentary reference to Louis-Philippe's mother in one of the lines. Hugo published the play, sued the *Comédie Française* and, in his address to the court, portrayed the ban as the arbitrary and despotic act of a government that was not very sure of itself. Pending the verdict he gave up the literary pension which he had been receiving since 1823. He was to lose the case.

1833. *Lucrèce Borgia* went into rehearsal at the Theatre of the Porte Saint Martin. Hugo fell in love with Juliette Drouet, the twenty-six year old actress playing the role of the princess Negroni. The play was performed for the first time on 2 February and was an instant success. On 16 February, the poet and Juliette became lovers, the beginning of a love story that lasted for fifty years. In May, *L'Europe Littéraire* published a long essay by Hugo in which he analysed the evolution of the French language and expounded his views on the function of the dramatic poet in society. Hugo then wrote *Marie Tudor*. The first performance, on 6 November, ended in uproar and "Miss Juliette" had to give up the part. Hugo worked for Louise Bertin on the libretto of an opera based on *Notre-Dame de Paris* and published an essay in *L'Europe Littéraire* on Ymbert Galloix, a young poet who died of dejection and hunger.

Photo © The City of Paris Victor Hugo Exhibition, 1985

Mademoiselle Juliette, *lithograph by Léon Noël. This portrait of Juliette Drouet was made in 1832, a year before she met Hugo.*

giants on the scene of action. The opposition of pen and sword, of warrior and poet, is given added significance if one remembers that Hugo's own father had been a general under Napoleon.

The paradox of Hugo's *grand siècle* helps explain the central importance of Waterloo in *Les Misérables*. For Napoleon's eclipse, in the structure of the novel, is clearly articulated on Valjean's re-emergence and ascent. The symbolic contrast is implicit in the name of Bonaparte's early victory at Montenotte—a word coupling the images of ascent and darkness (monte/notte)—a victory which coincides chronologically with Valjean's descent into the prison hell. Victory and defeat are dialectically bound to each other. Waterloo appears as a hinge, a turning point.

History itself thus turns out to be paradoxical and ambiguous. Political reactions, such as the Bourbon Restoration of 1815, are setbacks, but also fertile discontinuities in the larger text of History. Is it not objectively the fate of revolutionary thinking throughout the nineteenth century to be Janus-faced? For the Revolution, whose interrupted work still remains to be completed, is already an event of the past. Hugo's personal experience mirrors the collective experience of an archaeology of revolutionary moments: 1789, 1830, 1848, 1870. The double glance—progressive and regressive—helps explain why Hugo's thematics of Revolution are at the same time future-directed and deeply concerned with origins. The genetic motif is clearly stated in *William Shakespeare:* the French Revolution has spiritually engendered all modern thinkers. *"C'est là leur père et leur mère."*

The paternal and maternal images may seem banal. What is less banal is that Hugo's work insists almost obsessively on the themes of severance from the mother and eclipse of the father. The weaning of the Vendéen children at the beginning of *Quatrevingt-Treize*, when they are adopted by the Revolutionary battalion, corresponds no doubt to Hugo's autobiographical awareness of withdrawal from the royalist ideas represented by his own Vendéenne mother. But though Marius in *Les Misérables*, and Hugo himself, accede regressively to the truth of the Revolution by belatedly discovering their Bonapartist father, it is equally telling that their father has to disappear and that a hiatus is established.

The name of Marius' father is Pontmercy, the first syllable of which (*pont*) clearly suggests the image of a bridge; and a bridge, in this context, can be understood to span a gap, to connect the past and the future, to provide a meaningful legacy. But bridges can also collapse, or be destroyed, suggesting the need for a new beginning. It is significant that, in *Les Misérables*, father and son never meet. The fathers are in fact notoriously absent in Hugo's fiction; the Condemned Man mentions only the women in his family (is he not perhaps guilty of parricide?); Frollo, an orphan early in life, becomes a substitute father to his brother Jehan; Valjean loses both his parents as a child, and also becomes a surrogate father to his family; Gilliatt, in *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, is only known to have had a mother; Gwynplaine's father, in *L'Homme qui Rit*, has died in exile; Gauvain, in *Quatrevingt-Treize*, is also an orphan.

Sometimes a grandfather may take over, usurping the role of the real father, as when Monsieur Gillenormand, in *Les Misérables*, ▶

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Photo © Roger Viollet, Paris

The poet's father and mother. General Léopold Hugo (1773-1828) as drawn by Victor Hugo; and Sophie Hugo (1772-1821), née Trébuchet, by Achille Devéria.

1834. Hugo published an essay on Mirabeau as the preface to the *Mémoires de Mirabeau*. In March, he published *Littérature et Philosophie Mêlées*, a collection of articles, essays and prose fragments dating from different periods of the writer's life. He wrote *Claude Gueux*, an account based on the true story of a worker who had been jailed for stealing a loaf of bread and who had revolted against the prison regime and had killed the warden. Hugo's searing criticism of poverty and the penal system was combined with a plea for literacy and for education for the mass of the population. In Hugo's view, the provision of instruction would break the vicious circle of crime and punishment. Since Juliette had fled from Paris following an angry scene prompted by jealousy and had taken refuge with her sister in Brittany, Hugo set out after her and brought her back to the capital in slow stages, stopping on the way to sketch a number of architectural and natural curiosities. Donizetti's opera *Lucrezia Borgia*, based on Hugo's play, was given its first performance in Milan.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

1835. Hugo was made a founder member of the Committee which was established to watch over "the original monuments of literature, philosophy and the sciences and arts, and their bearing on the general history of France". He was to make very many declarations before the Committee in subsequent years. *Angelo, Tyran de Padoue* (Angelo, the Tyrant of Padua) was performed at the *Comédie Française* and published. At the end of July, Hugo left with Juliette for a one-month trip to Normandy and, on their return, they spent a further month in the Bièvre valley. A new collection of verse, *Les Chants du Crépuscule*, was published in October.

Claude Gueux, the hero of Hugo's novel of the same name, by the Swiss-born French artist Théophile Alexandre Steinlen (1859-1923).

The Marquis de Lantenac, a character in Hugo's novel* Quatrevingt-Treize *(1874), reads the poster declaring him an outlaw. Illustration by Gustave Brion (1875).

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

▶ wilfully cancels the father's presence, symbolically erasing the entire 1789-1815 episode as criminal and irrelevant. But more significant, in terms of the paternal image, is Hugo's affirmation—in the very text that states that all nineteenth-century thought is a child of the Revolution—that the Revolution is itself fatherless. The section entitled "Le Dix-neuvième Siècle," at the end of *William Shakespeare*, begins with the peremptory assertions that the nineteenth century is answerable only to itself (*"...ne relève que de lui-même"*), and that it is the nature of the nineteenth century to dispense with ancestors (*"Il est de sa nature révolutionnaire de se passer d'ancêtres"*). There is only one step needed to extend this negative family metaphor to nineteenth-century writers, and we can guess whom Hugo has in mind: "The poets and writers of the nineteenth century have neither masters nor models." The revolutionary metaphor suggests a declaration of independence and originality for Literature itself. But such a notion of being one's own origin, one's own father, does not go without a sense of anguish and even guilt. Subliminally, it

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1836. Hugo was twice a candidate for a seat at the French Academy, but was not elected. In the summer, he went on a month-long journey with Juliette and the artist Célestin Nanteuil to Brittany and Normandy, which afforded him the opportunity of indulging his taste for topographical draughtsmanship. *La Esmeralda*, an opera by Louise Bertin, with libretto by Hugo, was first performed at the Paris Opera in November, but was a failure.

1837. Eugène Hugo, whose mental condition had grown progressively worse over the past fifteen years, died in an asylum. In February, Hugo published in booklet form *La Charité*, the proceeds of which went to the poor people of the 10th district of Paris, while in June, he published a collection of poems entitled *Les Voix Intérieures*. His annual journey with Juliette took them to Belgium and Normandy for one month.

1838. Hugo wrote *Ruy Blas*, which was the first play to be performed at the newly completed *Théâtre de la Renaissance*, in November.

1839. Hugo started and then abandoned a play on the Man in the Iron Mask, *Les Jumeaux*, before setting out, for almost two months, on a trip with Juliette, during which they first went to Strasbourg and then travelled along the right bank of the Rhine, on to Switzerland and down the Rhone valley to the Mediterranean. It was in the course of this journey that Hugo visited the penal settlement in Toulon. He was again a candidate for the French Academy but, after seven inconclusive ballots, the election was deferred for two months.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

The old bridge at Lucerne, Switzerland, pen and ink drawing by Victor Hugo, dated 13 September 1839, on which he wrote: "What I see from my window. For my Didine." ("Didine" was a pet name for his eldest daughter Léopoldine).

involves a death wish. The Revolution remains for Hugo a deeply troubling reality: he knows that regicide is but a form of parricide.

Complicating this sense of guilt and anguish is a latent fear of the masses, and a not-so-hidden dim view of the otherwise positive and progress-oriented notion of *siècle*. What is involved is something more profound than fear of violence, distrust of the mob, or hostility to an increasingly materialistic socialism. It is history itself, as a grim process and as a catalogue of crimes that Hugo the *homme siècle* is paradoxically led to denounce. History is the brutal *fait accompli*. And the key word *siècle*, often associated with epic vision and utopian optimism, also condemns the worldly spirit, the sequential nightmare of history, the *mur des siècles* of the sombre opening poem of *La Légende des Siècles*.

Thus Hugo's lasting fascination with history and the historical process is attended by misgivings and anxiety. He comes to question the validity and ethics of a historical perspective, while convinced that the writer must speak for his time. Compelled to

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Pen drawing by Hugo depicting Thénardier, a character in* Les Misérables *(1862).

confront and decipher the laws of history, he also experiences an almost Voltairean view of history as a cortège of unjustifiable calamities. Hugo's tone at times reveals a true sense of horror. He writes of the "tragic sob" of history; he defines history as the accomplice of crime, as the great spiller of blood. *La Légende des Siècles* was to be the great epic poem of humanity's quest across historic time. Yet Hugo, using the word *siècle*, also stigmatizes the commitment to this time of history as a way of denying the timeless life of the spirit.

Le siècle ingrat, le siècle affreux, le siècle immonde

A triple indictment such as this helps to put into proper perspective the prophetic vision of Hugo as he looks forward into the future: the century that lies ahead. We are reminded of the idealistic student-revolutionary Enjolras who, from atop the barricades in *Les Misérables*, as he is about to lay down his life for a political cause, prophesies a time when it will be possible to put an end to the political adventure, emerge from the nightmare of history, and make an exit from the "forest of events."

Is this not precisely the ultimate paradox of Hugo, *l'homme siècle:* that the man most committed to the history and politics of his day should also be the one who most steadily dreamed of transcending them? ■

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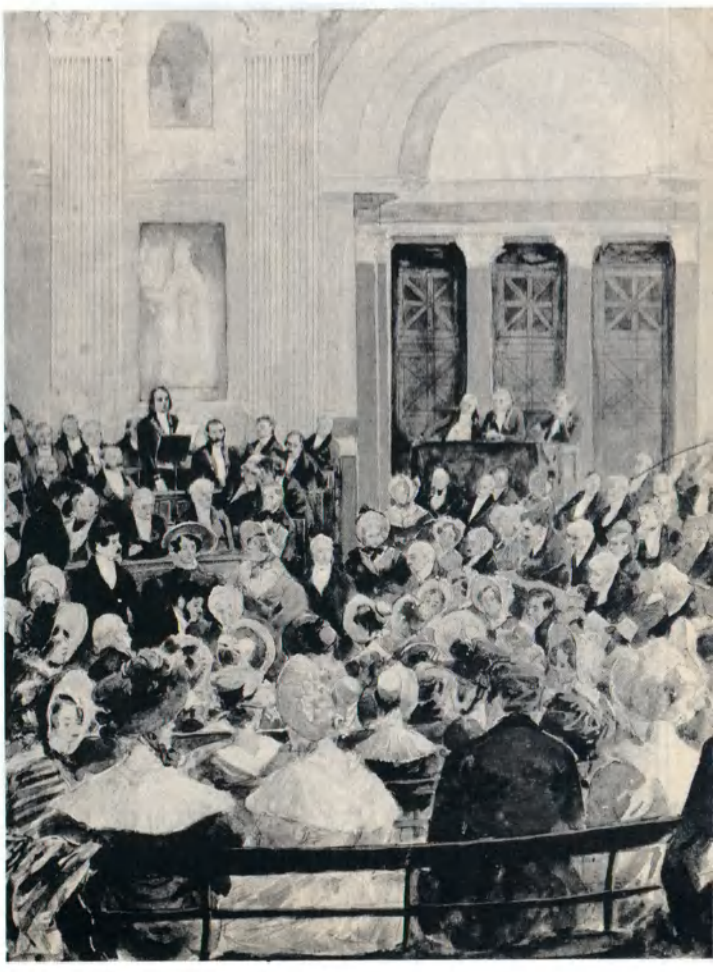
1840. The election to the Academy was held, but Hugo was again beaten. In May, he published a new volume of poetry, *Les Rayons et les Ombres*. He went on a journey to the Rhine with Juliette. Throughout the tour, Hugo kept a voluminous travel "journal", which he sent back to his family as he proceeded, and he made a large number of drawings in his sketchbook and album and on the manuscript itself. On his return to Paris, his attention was taken up with the repatriation of Napoleon's ashes. On 15 December, the actual day of the official ceremony, he published his verses on *Le Retour de l'Empereur* as a booklet, and this was followed one week later by a complete collection of poems on Napoleon.

1841. At his fourth attempt, Hugo was elected a member of the French Academy on the first ballot, although by a very small majority. In June, he was formally received into the Academy and delivered an address that was both political and literary in import. He devoted himself to *Le Rhin*, a book based on his travels to Champagne in 1838 and to the Rhine in 1840.

1842. *Le Rhin* was published in January. In June, Hugo was elected Director of the Academy and, in that capacity, tendered the official condolences of the entire French Institute to Louis-Philippe on the occasion of the accidental death of his eldest son. He began and completed a new play, *Les Burgraves*, which was accepted by the *Comédie Française*.

Photo © Bulloz. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*



Victor Hugo is admitted to the Académie Française (1841). Water-colour by Henri Vogel.

"Don't talk to me about modern drama!!!" Caricature of a conservative critic, drawn by Hugo.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

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1843. On 15 February, Hugo had the "distressing happiness to give his daughter's hand in mariage". Léopoldine married Charles Vacquerie, the son of a Le Havre shipowner. *Les Burgraves* was performed for the first time on 7 March, but was regarded as a failure. In July, Hugo paid a lightning visit to Léopoldine and her family before leaving on a long journey to Spain and the Pyrenees. On 4 September, Léopoldine and her husband, and her husband's uncle and nephew, were drowned in the river Seine at Villequier. Hugo learnt the news from the press five days after the tragedy and returned to Paris to be with his stricken family. The only glimmer of light in that gloomy year was the relationship which Hugo struck up with Léonie Biard.

1844. Hugo's literary output was confined to a small number of poems, most of which were inspired by his love for Léonie. Hugo became a close friend and confidant of the King. Verdi's opera, *Ernani*, based on Hugo's play, performed in Vienna.

1845. Hugo was elevated to the French peerage by the King. He published a new and definitive edition of *Le Rhin*. In July, the police caught him in flagrant adultery with Léonie Biard. As a peer, Hugo avoided arrest, but Léonie was thrown into prison and the scandal was such that Hugo had to pretend that he was travelling abroad. In reality, however, he was compelled to withdraw almost completely from society. He started to write *Les Misères*, the novel that was to become *Les Misérables*.

Occupation of the Yuanmingyuan or summer palace by British and French troops in 1860, before the palace was destroyed by fire. This imperial residence was situated on Lake Kunming, northwest of Beijing.

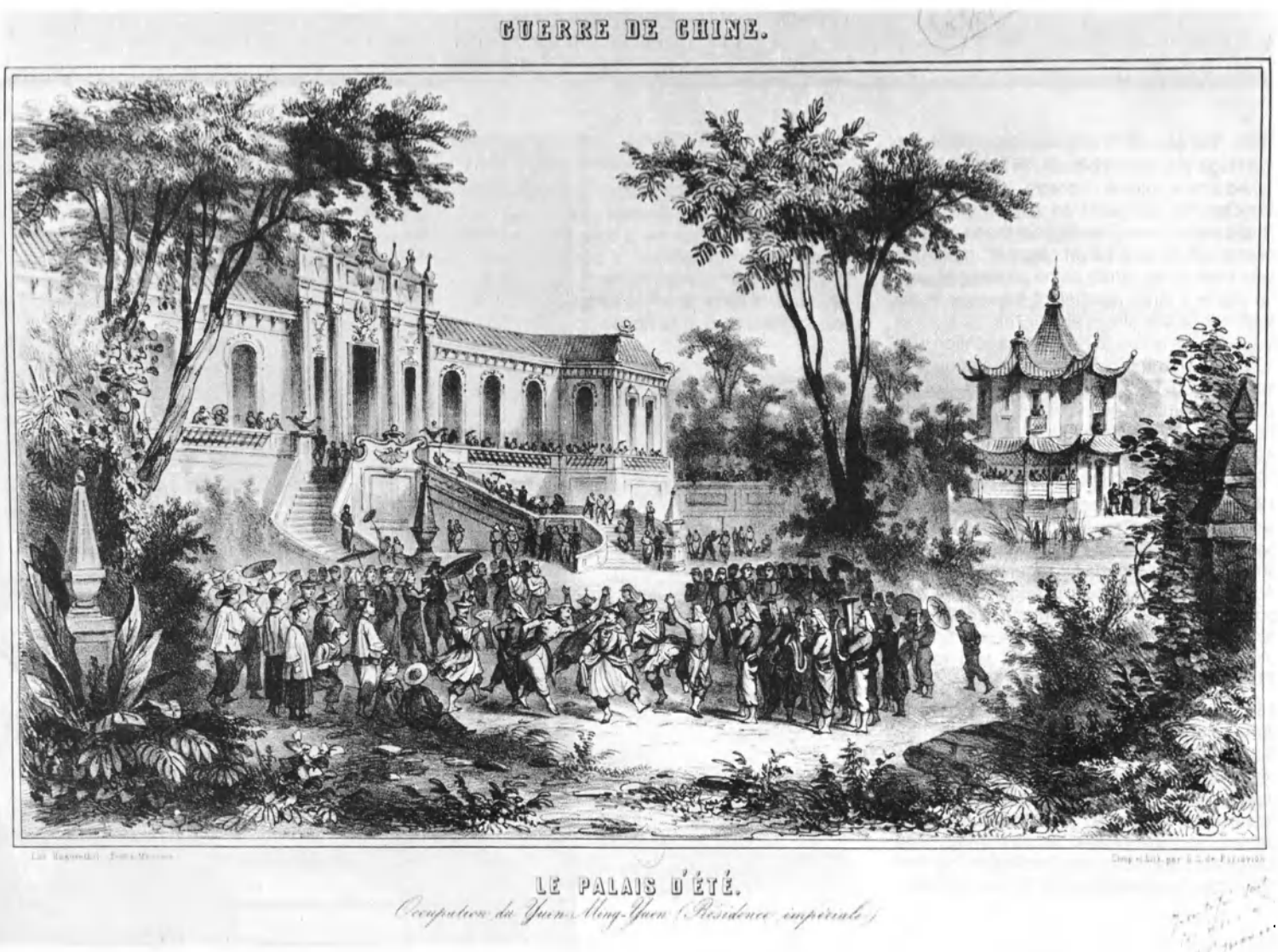

Photo © Roger Viollet, Paris. Bibliothèque Nationale

1846. At the beginning of February, Hugo re-emerged from his state of reclusion to attend a meeting of the Monuments Committee. Shortly afterwards, he made his first speech before the Chamber of Peers on the ownership of works of art. He visited the *Conciergerie* prison, where he took copious notes. Claire Pradier, the only child of Juliette Drouet, died at the age of twenty. Hugo, who had always acted as though he were the adoptive father of the young woman, shared Juliette's grief. He visited Villequier for the first time. He continued to write poetry and work on his novel.

1847. Hugo visited the *La Roquette* prison, where he had a conversation with a prisoner under sentence of death. He worked on speeches dealing with penal reform and child labour, and spoke in the Chamber of Peers in favour of subsidies for the theatre and the abrogation of the law exiling the Bonaparte family, observing that the government had much less to fear from that princely family than from the starving populace. He became friendly with the actress Alice Ozy and went on a one-week trip to Normandy with Juliette, passing through Villequier, which prompted him to write the celebrated verses starting *"Demain, dès l'aube, à l'heure où blanchit la campagne ..."* (Tomorrow, at dawn, at the hour when the landscape is shrouded in white...). He continued to work on *Les Misérables.* Dargomizhsky's opera *Esmeralda*, based on Hugo's play, was given its first performance in Moscow.

Photo © Roger Viollet, Paris

Léopoldine and the Book of Hours, ***a portrait of Léopoldine Hugo aged eleven, by Auguste de Châtillon. Her accidental death by drowning, near the village of Villequier, between Rouen and Le Havre, when she was nineteen, was a terrible blow to Hugo. His paternal love for Léopoldine was echoed in the relationship between Jean Valjean and Cosette in*** **Les Misérables** ***and inspired one of his finest poems,*** **Demain, dès l'aube, à l'heure où blanchit la campagne** ***(Les Contemplations). The house of Léopoldine's parents-in-law, at Villequier, on the banks of the Seine, has become a museum, a Victor Hugo shrine comparable to his house in the Place des Vosges, Paris, and Hauteville House, Guernsey.***

The sack of the Summer Palace

To Captain Butler

Hauteville House,
25 November, 1861

You ask my opinion, Sir, about the China expedition. You consider this expedition to be honourable and glorious, and you have the kindness to attach some consideration to my feelings; according to you, the China expedition, carried out jointly under the flags of Queen Victoria and the Emperor Napoleon, is a glory to be shared between France and England, and you wish to know how much approval I feel I can give to this English and French victory.

Since you wish to know my opinion, here it is:

There was, in a corner of the world, a wonder of the world; this wonder was called the Summer Palace. Art has two principles, the Idea, which produces European art, and the Chimera, which produces oriental art. The Summer Palace was to chimerical art what the Parthenon is to ideal art. All that can be begotten of the imagination of an almost extra-human people was there. It was not a single, unique work like the Parthenon. It was a kind of enormous model of the chimera, if the chimera can have a model. Imagine some inexpressible construction, something like a lunar building, and you will have the Summer Palace. Build a dream with marble, jade, bronze and porcelain, frame it with cedar wood, cover it with precious stones, drape it with silk, make it here a sanctuary, there a harem, elsewhere a citadel, put gods there, and monsters, varnish it, enamel it, gild it, paint it, have architects who are poets build the thousand and one dreams of the thousand and one nights, add gardens, basins, gushing water and foam, swans, ibis, peacocks, suppose in a word a sort of dazzling cavern of human fantasy with the face of a temple and palace, such was this building. The slow work of generations had been necessary to create it. This edifice, as enormous as a city, had been built by the centuries, for whom? For the peoples. For the work of time belongs to man. Artists, poets and philosophers knew the Summer Palace; Voltaire talks of it. People spoke of the Parthenon in Greece, the pyramids in Egypt, the Coliseum in Rome, Notre-Dame in Paris, the Summer Palace in the Orient. If people did not see it they imagined it. It was a kind of tremendous unknown masterpiece, glimpsed from the distance in a kind of twilight, like a silhouette of the civilization of Asia on the horizon of the civilization of Europe.

This wonder has disappeared.

One day two bandits entered the Summer Palace. One plundered, the other burned. Victory can be a thieving woman, or so it seems. The devastation of the Summer Palace was accomplished by the two victors acting jointly. Mixed up in all this is the name of Elgin, which inevitably calls to mind the Parthenon. What was done to the Parthenon was done to the Summer Palace, more thoroughly and better, so that nothing of it should be left. All the treasures of all our cathedrals put together could not equal this formidable and splendid museum of the Orient. It contained not only masterpieces of art, but masses of jewelry. What a great exploit, what a windfall! One of the two victors filled his pockets; when the other saw this he filled his coffers. And back they came to Europe, arm in arm, laughing away. Such is the story of the two bandits.

We Europeans are the civilized ones, and for us the Chinese are the barbarians. This is what civilization has done to barbarism.

Before history, one of the two bandits will be called France; the other will be called England. But I protest, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity! the crimes of those who lead are not the fault of those who are led; Governments are sometimes bandits, peoples never.

The French empire has pocketed half of this victory, and today with a kind of proprietorial naivety it displays the splendid bric-à-brac of the Summer Palace. I hope that a day will come when France, delivered and cleansed, will return this booty to despoiled China.

Meanwhile, there is a theft and two thieves.

I take note.

This, Sir, is how much approval I give to the China expedition.

Victor Hugo ■

African first nights

by Jacques Téphany

IN 1866, during his eleventh year of exile in Guernsey, Hugo wrote, in two months, a four-act, prose melodrama entitled *Mille Francs de Récompense* (A Thousand Francs Reward). Was the world-renowned author of *Les Misérables* at long last going to start writing for the theatre again, something he had not done since the failure of his play *Les Burgraves* in 1843?

This, at any rate, was what the exiled writer's friends were saying in Paris, where this event was awaited with the greatest impatience. Instead, the visionary of Guernsey put away the large blue sheets of paper, covered with his extraordinary handwriting, in the bottom of a trunk, declaring that the censors would not pass it for publication, and adding, laconically, "I wrote it to rid myself of an obsession with an idea".

The work was among a collection of plays, entitled *Théâtre en Liberté*, that remained unpublished during Hugo's lifetime. It resurfaced in 1934, when it was published for the first time. It was not staged until 1961, when it was put on in Strasbourg by Hubert Gignoux. Twenty-four years later, on the occasion of the centenary of the author's death, our turn came to stage the ballad of Glapieu.

What is it about?

The scene is set in the Paris of the 1820s. An outlawed convict named Glapieu—a Jean Valjean with a sense of humour—creeps stealthily over the rooftops of the city. He is hungry, but manages to summon up just enough strength to bid defiance to God: "The first good deed I have the opportunity to do I shall do at once. That will put God in the wrong."

Glapieu glances through the window of a wretched attic. Inside he sees an old man who is slowly dying, surrounded by the trophies he won as a soldier of the Imperial army. Only his widowed daughter, Etiennette, and his grand-daughter, Cyprienne, remain to watch over him in his poverty. In order to support them Major Gédouard is reduced to giving music lessons. This was appalling, naked destitution—something men perhaps may bear, but not women.

Cyprienne is in love with a young bank clerk, Edgar Marc, who is employed by the rich banker Baron Puencarral. And it is in the name of this same Puencarral that all Gédouard's furniture, including his piano, has been seized. The agent of this despicable act is a businessman named Rousseline, the pitiless incarnation of the spirit of the Restoration period. Rousseline decides to teach Etiennette a lesson in realism—if you want to be rich, do not look as though you are poor, and if you do not wish to condemn your daughter to destitution, give her to me and I shall marry her. At the end of her tether, like Fantine in *Les Misérables*, Etiennette leaves the choice to her daughter. But Cyprienne, like Cosette in the same novel, obeys the voice of youth and refuses the offer. At this point Glapieu, who has been concealed the while in a cupboard, like the lover in any trivial bedroom farce, emerges crying "Well said, my dear!" The tone of the play is set.

I shall not go over all the ins and outs of the melodrama (which reveals that the banker is Etiennette's long-lost husband and Cyprienne's father), but content myself with pointing out that the whole spirit of the play is personified in that of the central character, Glapieu. The convict is neither saint nor martyr. He is the street-urchin Gavroche at fifty, he is the spirit of Paris, he is the bitter, poetic laughter of the people.

If the convict—who is another kind of exile—is, in the eyes of official morality, guilty of every shortcoming, his position gives him an advantage over the honest bourgeois, he is "on the outside". Glapieu on his rooftop is Hugo on his island. They can both play at tearing away the mask of honesty. The judge says: "You are a thief." What does Glapieu say? "I stole because I was hungry." Justice, like the army, does not want to know, it sticks to the bare facts. So Glapieu is arrested at the age of sixteen and jailed for several years, long enough for a lad to get to know about politics.

In *Mille Francs de Récompense* the miracle is that the hero's soul is still that of a child. Humour, which in Hugo is the courtesy of despair, is also the mark of youth. And has the stage any better tool than laughter for showing reality in a new light? In a flash it reveals what manifestos, exile, epics and novels are slow to analyse. It is grace as against ponderousness. Our presentation in the theatre was based on this duality.

First the melodramatic aspect; we had to believe in it and put all our heart into it. Melodrama is a struggle between the ideal and the real, between magnanimity and money, between youth and the past. Bad melodrama depicts absolute good against absolute evil, and this confrontation often results in equally absolute boredom. But good melodrama—and *Mille Francs de Récompense* is a masterpiece of its kind—shows that good and evil are relative.

We take to Edgar Marc, for example, because he loves Cyprienne; yet he is the very stuff of which the bourgeois are made and will become a cold, forbiddingly worthy man. Rousseline, who is a "bad" character, has the same advantage as the convict of being on the outside; and he has, too, his intellectual honesty. The other bad charac-

Life and Times of V. H.

1848. The July Monarchy fell on 22 February and the Republic was proclaimed. Hugo, who had tried in vain to have the Duchess Hélène d'Orléans appointed regent, was offered the post of Mayor of the 8th district of Paris, but he refused. In June, Hugo was elected to the Constituent Assembly and, during the "June days" exposed himself to the gunfire of the insurgents in an endeavour to restore order. His activities until the end of the year were almost entirely political. He intervened in favour of political prisoners threatened with deportation or death; he spoke against the restrictions placed on the freedom of the press and for the provision of financial support for theatres, which had remained closed since the June uprising, for the abolition of the death penalty and against theatre censorship. He also voted in favour of the inclusion of a reference to Human Rights in the preamble to the Constitution and against any impairment of universal suffrage. In November, he made an important speech on the budgetary restrictions which it was proposed to impose on schools, universities and cultural institutions, and on the subsidies granted to the sciences and arts, and warned the elected representatives against trying to make savings on "intellectual well-being" by declaring: "It is necessary to raise man's spirit and guide it towards God, towards awareness, beauty, justice and truth, towards disinterested acts and greatness. It is by doing this—and this alone—that you will find man at peace with himself and hence at peace with society". The Presidential elections were held in December. Hugo, who had been impressed by a book entitled *L'Extinction du Paupérisme* (the abolition of dire poverty) voted for its author, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, who won the election over Cavaignac, Lamartine and others.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Victor Hugo, in 1848, planting "the tree of liberty" in the Place Royal (now the Place des Vosges), a water-colour by Henri Vogel. In the background can be seen the house in which Hugo lived.

Photo © Musées de la Ville de Paris-SPADEM, 198

Photo of Victor Hugo in Brussels in 1867 taken by Albert d'Arnoux, known as Bertall (1820-1882)

Photo © Suzanne Fournier, Paris

The French actor Pierre Meyrand in the role of the outlaw Glapieu, in a production of Hugo's play* Mille Francs de Récompense *("One Thousand Francs Reward") staged by the Théâtre en Liberté company in 1985 at the Cité Internationale Universitaire in Paris.

1849. In the Assembly, Hugo continued to intervene in favour of the arts, including the completion of the Louvre Museum, the abolition of any theatre censorship and the provision of financial assistance to artists. He was elected to the new Legislative Assembly, in which he made his mark by delivering an explosive speech on *La Misère* (poverty). In August, Hugo was elected Chairman of the International Peace Congress, at which he made the opening and closing addresses, and in October he protested against the repression, by French troops, of the republican uprising against the Pope in Rome. Even so, his very active public life did not prevent him from continuing to write.

1850. On 15 January, a bill aimed at granting the clergy the monopoly of public education was rejected by Hugo as being a monstrous retrograde step. In his view, the ideal consisted of free, secular and, above all else, compulsory education, where "the gates of knowledge would all be wide open to all brains". The forcible language of the discourse *On the Freedom of Education* was followed by other stands which ultimately alienated Hugo from the conservative parliamentarians. These included declarations on the restrictions placed on voting rights, against deportation and in favour of the freedom of the theatre and the press. He published an open letter addressed to the meeting of the International Peace Congress in Frankfurt and continued, albeit at a much slower pace, his poetic activity. Liszt's symphonic poem "What is Heard on the Mountain", based on poems by Hugo, was performed in Weimar.

La Conscience Devant une Mauvaise Action ***(Conscience faced with a bad action). A drawing by Victor Hugo.***

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

ters think that they are good—he knows that he is bad. He has no liking for the bourgeois, any more than has Glapieu—he likes only himself. And here the two real heroes of the play, the outcast of society and the outcast of evil, are at one. There was the same fatal bond between Valjean and Javert.

In her staging of this duel, Arlette Téphany decided on an empty stage rather than a realistic setting, relying on the imagination of the audience and its appreciation of the text.

All that is to be seen, centre stage, is a piano. It is at once a coffin and a music-box, a safe and a cultural symbol of bourgeois aspirations. Glapieu will smash this object, which is both enemy and accomplice, before becoming enmeshed in its strings like a fly in a spider's web.

Pierre Meyrand, who played the part of Glapieu, interprets the role in the spirit of Chaplin; but the vagabond he portrays is not a comic tramp but a hard man who has learned how to struggle for life, to fight against hunger. With him the grotesque becomes bravado, the ridiculous is heightened with emotion. We do not laugh *at* him, but *with* him.

The show, and its leading actor, had a tremendous reception wherever it was staged in France, both in Paris and in the provinces. Audiences consisting both of ordinary suburbanites and of young people were particularly enthusiastic. Author, actors and public came together in a unity

few playwrights anywhere in the world have been capable of inspiring. Hugo had been rediscovered.

In Africa, during an official tour of eight French-speaking countries, this interaction achieved an almost miraculous intensity. We played on two memorable occasions to audiences of 2,000 students on a basket-ball field in Dakar and of 3,000 in a concrete amphitheatre in Kinshasa.

The actors, sweating profusely in their heavy winter costumes, wondered how a performance lasting two and a half hours, with no scenery, nothing but a piano, a text, ten arc-lamps and very poor acoustics, could hold such a vast audience. What would our African hosts find to interest them in these stories of money, of a married woman become a widow, of the Emperor and of the Restoration? How would they be able to penetrate the obscurities of Hugo?

No sooner had Glapieu spoken his first lines than the attention of the audience was riveted and its sympathy captured. Laughter came in short but hearty bursts. There was none of the inertia of the kind of audience that is slow to laugh and then goes on laughing because it has begun to laugh, so that neither the action of the play nor the actors can continue. This was alert, observant laughter of an audience that seemed to anticipate Hugo's humour. They were expecting it, they wanted it. The show maintained its pace despite the heat and difficult technical conditions.

For the audience was there, ready to play its part, and the actors delighted in working the miracle of melodrama, that mixture of drama and emotion. When Glapieu is alone, in front of the safe, he lights a cigar, assumes the pose of a person of consequence, and suddenly the vagabond is transformed into a business magnate. At this point the audience burst into thunderous gales of Homeric laughter. At other times there were ripples of admiration for the villain's stratagems (yes, admiration, for after all it is up to the poor to thwart his tricks). And then there were anxious sighs or embarrassed giggles at the transports of the lovers, Cyprienne and Edgar.

There was, too, a silence full of uneasy amazement when Etiennette launched into the monologue in which she makes her confession with the words: "Dreadful things happen; women are not always happy." The actress uttered these words simply, in matter-of-fact tones, yet with all the feeling that a woman can put into them. The audience could be heard to emit, in unison, a single groan of pity.

And when, at the final trial, Glapieu begins to unravel the threads of the plot and to perform his good deed (and in so doing sacrifice himself), the audience of three thousand at Kinshasa held its collective breath in suspense. My neighbour was moved to tears. Then, when Glapieu made his exit to go back to prison, the three thousand rose to their feet as one with a cry that we did not understand at first, the cry "Encore" uttered by three thousand people smiling through their tears.

All the actors taking part and the few French people in the audience were under the spell of the most powerful theatrical experience of their lives. It was a celebration of the French language and the play had been performed before *its very own* audience, the audience it would surely have had in 1866 had Hugo not locked it away at that time.

We begin to understand the nature of the "obsession with an idea" of which Hugo had spoken. Novels did not give him the opportunity to reach the reader directly, not even novels that became legendary, like *Les Misérables*. His relationship with the reader was always purely conceptual. In the theatre, and especially in *Mille Francs de Récompense*, which is a really a shortened, dramatized version of *Les Misérables*, Hugo would have felt again the touch of human warmth. He denied himself that pleasure, returning to exile, as Glapieu returned to prison, with no illusions.

The illusions are for us, we who are people of the theatre. ■

JACQUES TEPHANY, *of France, who combines the roles of playwright and script-writer with those of theatre administrator and producer, is also the author of studies on Victor Hugo and, in particular, on his play* Mille Francs de Récompense. *The presentation of* Mille Francs de Récompense *which he evokes in this article was created in 1979-1980 by the* Théâtre en Liberté *company, under the direction of Arlette Téphany, and has been revived in 1985. It was broadcast on French television in July and has been on tour in France and in French-speaking Africa under the aegis of the* Association Française d'Action Artistique.

Ink, Charcoal and Soot

In his* Salon de 1859*, a critical account of the major art exhibition of that year, the poet Charles Baudelaire spoke of "the magnificent imagination" revealed in Hugo's drawings. Hugo wrote to Baudelaire that he was "delighted and very proud that you should think well of what I like to call my pen and ink drawings. In fact I have ended up using pencil, charcoal, sepia, coal, soot and all kinds of bizarre mixtures which happen to bring out more or less what my eye, or rather my mind's eye, retains. I find this an amusing pastime between two stanzas".

As Pierre Georgel, curator of the* Musée des Beaux Arts *of Dijon, points out in his study* Histoire d'un Peintre Malgré Lui *(An Artist in Spite of Himself) this was Hugo's way of stressing that his artistic output was secondary to what he considered to be his really important work—his writing. He did not want the attention of the general public to be distracted from his books, a position he maintained to the end of his life, preferring to show his "scribblings" only to a close circle of friends and intimates. Nevertheless, in bequeathing to the* Bibliothèque Nationale *the hundreds of drawings he had made and kept, he was indicating to posterity the very important place they filled in the overall schema of his creative work.

His very considerable artistic output (some three thousand known items, most of them produced between 1830 and 1876) is striking in its depth and variety of inspiration—caricatures, sketches made during his travels, real and imaginary landscapes, inkstains, imprints, cut-outs, the scrawlings of automatic writing. From 1848, drawing became more than merely a secondary activity for Hugo, indeed, for a few years it virtually eclipsed his literary work. His drawings soon gained recognition; the poet and novelist Théophile Gautier praised their "prodigious plastic sensitivity". They may even have had some influence on certain engravers and painters such as Gustave Doré and Rodolphe Bresdin. Van Gogh admired them and Picasso owned several of them.

The general public only really became aware of his artistic work in 1888, three years after his death, when the first exhibition of his drawings was held in Paris and when, at the beginning of the century, his house in the Place des Vosges, Paris, was opened as a museum. But full recognition of the scope and modernity of his art had to await the surrealists of the twentieth century who were quick to appreciate its chimeric quality and the "psychic automatism" which it reveals.

The importance of Hugo the artist—his imaginative richness and the singularity of his art whose ramifications have yet to be precisely defined—received the just recognition of a number of writers of both the 19th and the 20th century; among them must be counted Paul Claudel, who spoke of "the panic contemplation" that typifies these works, and Gaëtan Picon, who said, with Hugo's art in mind, that "drawing is the realm of the essential", the domain of spontaneity.

Today, going beyond the various more or less partial, partisan approaches to a disturbing body of art, a number of specialists, in particular Pierre Georgel, are attempting to establish a strict chronology of Hugo's artistic output in order to study more closely the relationships between his literary and his graphic work. These colour pages give a glimpse of the power and originality of Hugo the artist, a figure indissociable from Hugo the poet.

COLOUR PAGES

Page 19

Gilliatt Rising from the Foam, ***pen and ink and ink-wash, about 1865. Hugo described Gilliatt, the hero of his novel* Les Travailleurs de la Mer *(The Toilers of the Sea), as having "a visage darkened by wind and sea".***

Pages 20 and 21

Le Serpent en Exil ***(The Serpent in Exile). Ink-wash and gouache.***

Page 22

Above:* La Tour des Rats *(The Tower of Rats). Pen and ink and ink-wash. This drawing is dated 27 September 1840, during the period when Victor Hugo made his trip on the Rhine with Juliette Drouet, but it was probably re-worked in 1847.

Below:* Le Rocher Ortach *(The Ortac Rock), an islet near Alderney, in the Channel Islands. Pencil, sepia ink, wash-tint and water-colour, around 1863-1867.

Photos taken from *Victor Hugo, Dessins et Lavis*, by Jacqueline Lafargue © Editions Hervas, Paris, 1983. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*, Paris

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The showman poet

by René Char

***Below, manuscript of the first two stanzas of a poem written by Hugo at Jersey on 3 April 1854 and published in 1881 in the collection* Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit.**

"I am made of shadow and marble.
Like the black feet of the tree
I plunge deep into the night.
I listen; I am under ground;
From below I say to the thunder:
Wait! make no noise.

I, whom they call the poet,
Am in the speechless night
The mysterious staircase;
I am the Darkness-staircase;
In my gloomy spirals
The shadow opens its dim eyes."

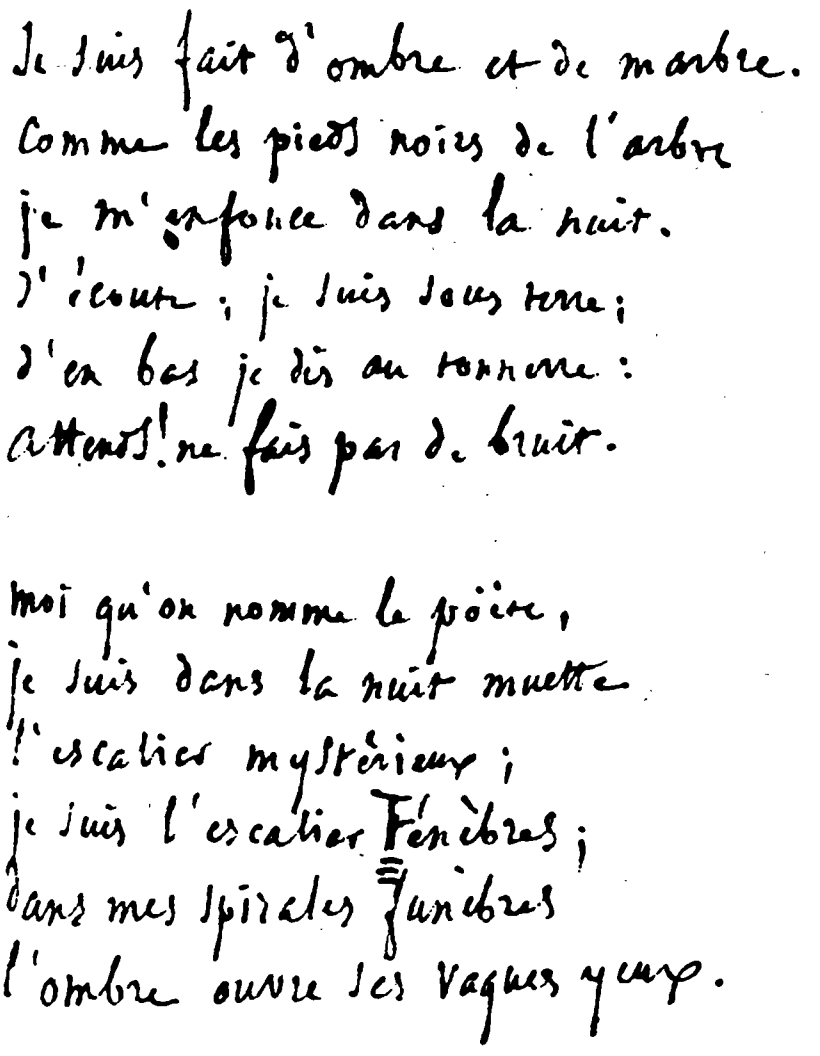
RATHER than a clear step forward in our understanding of the poetry of the nineteenth century, Hugo is an intense and teeming moment of the culture span of the period. Portly and august of bearing, his is the success of the extravagant, or, perhaps, the extravagance of the successful. Before his giant presence we gape, we admire, we guffaw with laughter, we seethe, we rage, or we declare ourselves partisans of the whole "Hugo show". We are taken aback by such an outpouring of cunningly contrived fatuity. On the instant we are filled with remorse. He is the least indispensable of the poets of our time; yet he it is who best succeeds in playing alternately upon the lost art of verse, when that art is inspired, the most harmonious and then the most vibrantly crimson of lights. He is effortless, mysterious, with the bounding grace of a tiger. His touch defies description, at times almost matching Racine's bewitching caress. He reaches the heights with the vertiginous speed and vertical flight of a rocket. Herein lies his share of greatness.

There are themes for all ages and all viewpoints, but not one of them is wholly satisfying for anyone. The flow from his torrential hand, seen in fragments traced out like runic spells on crumpled scraps and sheets, is unequalled. As the genius of the woods he out-Pans Pan. Taken as a whole he is impossible—a big-talking Barnum, flaunting his honours, his poesy, his wealth, wielding his verbal virtuosity in the ordinary affairs of daily life like a baton, a pass, an open-sesame. With his eclipse in the violent death inflicted on him by the rising star of Baudelaire—the Baudelaire bomb literally blew him to pieces—, all his fair fiefs claim their freedom, his days no longer rise in boastful dawn, whole segments of his poems break away, flying in their splendour before us. Of his interminable and often senile discourse with God and Satan there remain but a few needle-sharp barbs and some scattered lilies, which yet are almost unique in their fragrance and flame.

As a writer of prose Hugo cannot compete with Chateaubriand. He is worlds apart from Gérard de Nerval who, with his *Sylvie*, lent enchantment to age-old groves. Yet he could convey a picture of things he had seen far better than could the lens of Nicéphore Niepce's camera.

Hugo, it must be added, is the archetypal, grandiose mirror, shaped in the form of a heart and reflecting his achievement, to which must be held up for comparison the reputations of certain of our great contemporaries. This much too must be granted him. ■

RENE CHAR *is one of France's leading contemporary poets. In 1983,* Œuvres Complètes, *a collection of his poems and writings, was published in Gallimard's prestigious* La Pléiade *series, a very rare honour for a living poet. His latest work,* Les Voisinages de Van Gogh, *was published earlier this year.*


Je suis fait d'ombre et de marbre.
Comme les pieds noirs de l'arbre
je m'enfonce dans la nuit.
J'écoute ; je suis sous terre ;
d'en bas je dis au tonnerre :
attends ! ne fais pas de bruit.

Moi qu'on nomme le poète,
je suis dans la nuit muette
l'escalier mystérieux ;
je suis l'escalier Ténèbres ;
dans mes spirales funèbres
l'ombre ouvre ses vagues yeux.

Photo © Edition Paris Musées/Bibliothèque Nationale

'The voice of justice'

Victor Hugo in China

by Li Meiying

VICTOR Hugo was one of the first Western writers to be known and translated in China.

Chinese readers discovered him at the beginning of the century thanks to Su Zigu, a Chinese translator who in 1903 published the first eleven chapters of *Les Misérables* as a serial in a Shanghai daily newspaper. However inaccurate it may have been, this translation helped to make Hugo known to the Chinese and was soon followed by two more in 1906 and 1907. Keen interest was aroused in Hugo and more of his works appeared in Chinese: *Bug-Jargal, Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné, Notre-Dame de Paris, Quatrevingt-Treize, Les Travailleurs de la Mer, and Han d'Islande.*

Lu Xun (1881-1936), one of China's greatest writers, translated an extract from *Les Misérables*, which he published under the title of *Fantine.*

Zeng Pu (1872-1935), famous for his novel *The Flower Emerging from an Ocean of Sins*, was the first Chinese who set out to produce a Chinese version of Hugo's complete works. Between 1907 and 1935 he translated *Marie Tudor, Quatrevingt-Treize, Ruy Blas, Hernani, L'Homme qui Rit, Cromwell, Marion de Lorme, Le Roi s'Amuse, Les Jumeaux, Angelo, Tyran de Padoue, Le Théâtre en Liberté*, and *Notre-Dame de Paris*, as well as many other prose texts and three poems.

In the meantime, other works by Hugo were being translated and published in Chinese. They included versions of *Pauvres Gens*, by the writer and linguist Liu Bannong (1891-1934); *La Conscience*, by the poet Dai Wangshu (1905-1950); and *Saison des Semailles* and *Le Soir*, by the poet Liang Zongdai.

The height of Victor Hugo's fame in China came in 1935, the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

On that occasion, Mao Dun, one of our greatest modern novelists, published studies on *Les Misérables* and *Hernani.* Shen Baoji, a specialist in French culture, also brought out a study on *Les Misérables* and an "Anthology of the Poems of Victor Hugo". Ma Songrong, who had just paid a long visit to France, wrote "The French Novelist Victor Hugo" and "Victor Hugo as seen by the French Today".

Hugo was also given wide coverage in the most influential newspapers of the time such as "Beijing Morning" and "Impartiality".

In 1952, many noted Chinese personalities published newspaper articles on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Hugo's birth. The poet, playwright and politician Guo Moro (1892-1972), then Vice-President of the permanent committee of the People's National Assembly, paid a vibrant tribute to Hugo's memory in a work entitled "For Peace, Democracy and Progress". Mao Dun, then Minister of Culture, wrote "Why the Chinese like the Works of Victor Hugo", and proposed that the memory of Victor Hugo should be honoured at the second session of the World Peace Council, in Vienna.

At the same time, the Beijing Library organized an important exhibition on Hugo's life and work, and his works were prominently displayed in the bookshops. New translations appeared of some of his major works, notably *Quatrevingt-Treize, L'Homme qui Rit,* and *Les Misérables.* Biographical studies were also published.

Since 1976, texts by Hugo have been appearing at an even faster rate: there have been no less than eight different versions of *Les Misérables!* Three anthologies of his poetry, translated by Wen Jiasi, Jin Zhiping and Cheng Baoyi, are currently in course of publication.

In 1981 a nationwide symposium on Hugo, held at Changsha, the capital of Hunan province, was attended by hundreds of teachers and researchers specializing in French literature. Almost ninety studies were presented, and some twenty of them have appeared in a collection entitled *Commentaries on the Literary Works of Victor Hugo.*

Liu Mingjiu is preeminent among Hugo specialists in China. His work, begun in the early 1960s, was interrupted by the ten years of the "Cultural Revolution", but it is nevertheless considerable. He has translated all Hugo's theoretical texts and collected them in a work entitled "Victor Hugo Talks of Literature". And in the monumental "History of French Literature", the first two volumes of which have been published, one of the most important chapters is that in which Liu Mingjiu discusses Hugo.

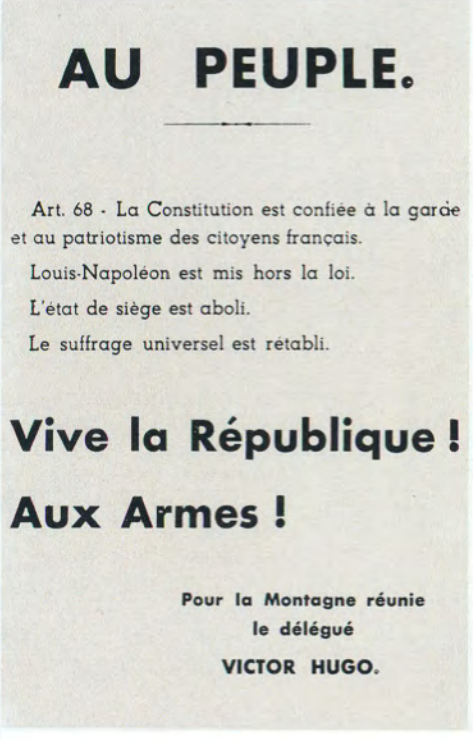
Another leading specialist, Feng Hanjin, is making a special study of Hugo's art of versification and the richness of his language.

Hugo's work has influenced a number of Chinese writers. Reading *Les Misérables*

Life and Times of V. H. (CONT. FROM P. 17)

1851. Besides being increasingly criticized by the government majority in the Assembly, Hugo was also going through a serious crisis in his love life. Juliette Drouet discovered her lover's relationship with Léonie Biard and the two women insisted that he choose between them. His family life was convulsed by the imprisonment of his sons for having written newspaper articles on capital punishment and the right of sanctuary for foreign refugees. On 2 December, Louis Napoléon's *coup d'Etat* found Hugo in the front rank of the republican resistance, but his efforts were powerless against the might of the army and the passive attitude of the civilian population. Nine days later, Hugo went into exile. Established in Brussels, he lost no time in starting *L'Histoire d'un Crime.* Verdi's opera *Rigoletto*, based on Hugo's *Le Roi s'Amuse*, was given its first performance in Venice.

1852. Writing was to become the only form of political resistance: "The inkstand versus the cannon", as Hugo was to put it in a letter to his wife. His work on *L'Histoire d'un Crime* progressed, substantiated as it was by the increasing number of testimonies provided by Frenchmen who had been expelled or had escaped, and his *Napoléon le Petit* took shape within weeks. Having been warned by the Belgian government that he would be liable to expulsion if he published a book on the "Prince-President", Hugo left Brussels in early August for Jersey, where his family and Juliette Drouet joined him. *Napoléon le Petit* was published in London and put on sale in Brussels the same day. The Hugo family moved into Marine Terrace in Jersey and the exile devoted himself to his poetry. On 29 November, Hugo made a speech in commemoration of the anniversary of the 1830 revolution in Poland, in which he hailed the Poles as being the "first-born of persecution".



AU PEUPLE.

Art. 68 - La Constitution est confiée à la garde et au patriotisme des citoyens français.

Louis-Napoléon est mis hors la loi.

L'état de siège est aboli.

Le suffrage universel est rétabli.

Vive la République !

Aux Armes !

Pour la Montagne réunie
le délégué
VICTOR HUGO.

Photo © City of Paris Victor Hugo Exhibition, 1985

After the coup d'état by the Prince/President Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, on 2 December 1851, Hugo called in vain on the people to rise up against the man who was to become Napoleon III. Hugo was obliged to flee the country, crossing the frontier into Belgium under a false name, on a passport procured for him by Juliette Drouet.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo

Frontispiece by Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) for an edition of* Châtiments. *Crushed by Hugo's poems, the imperial eagle is struck down by divine justice.

1853. Publication in Belgium of a volume of Hugo's *Œuvres Oratoires* (collected speeches). In Jersey, he continued to pour out satirical poems. The Hugo family was introduced to "table-turning". Although they were initially sceptical, they became adepts following a communication which seemed to come from Léopoldine. Over a two-year period, they received messages from more than one hundred "spirits", including Dante, Jesus Christ, Mozart, Rousseau, Socrates, Shakespeare and Luther. In November, *Les Châtiments* was published in two editions, one complete and the other expurgated, and the collection was thereafter smuggled into France.

1854. There was no let-up in the messages received through the table-turning exercises or in Hugo's enormous poetic output. In January, a death sentence passed on the neighbouring island prompted the exiled poet to address an appeal to the *Inhabitants of Guernsey*, calling them to abolish a punishment that was out of key with the times. He started work on a long poem which was eventually to become *La Fin de Satan* and, on the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution, made a lyrical and utopian speech, in which he affirmed that the emergence of the United States of Europe, and indeed of the Universal Republic, would mark the end of poverty and ignorance, and the birth of an educated and balanced civilization. The Spanish *Junta de Salud* (Committee of Public Safety) invited Hugo to settle in Spain, an offer which he was very tempted to accept. The anniversary of the Polish revolution afforded him an opportunity of publishing a pamphlet denouncing the Crimean War.

1855. Death of Abel Hugo, the poet's eldest brother. Hugo again wrote a number of brilliant pages on the occasion of the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution, as well as a host of poems, many of which were included in *Les Contemplations*. In October, three French exiles were expelled from Jersey. Hugo supported them by issuing a declaration which was to be signed by thirty-five other exiles, from France, Germany, Poland, Hungary and Italy and was, in the days following, to give rise to an order expelling all exiles. Hugo moved on to Guernsey and settled with his family in Saint Peter's Port.

inspired Su Manshu (1884-1918) with the idea of a new world, an extremely advanced theme in China at that time.

Lu Xun, who as we have seen translated an extract from *Les Misérables*, had a particular sympathy for Fantine, the woman "who was not left to live even in the slums". He keenly wished that one day such injustices would be brought to an end.

It has been maintained that Ba Jin, at the outset of his career, was fundamentally influenced by Emile Zola. But essentially he preferred Hugo. In his essay *Ba Jin talks of Literature*, he says: "People think that Maupassant and Zola are the most widely read and best known French writers in China. But personally I should mention, in addition to them, Victor Hugo and Jean-Jacques Rousseau." And Ba Jin recognized that *Les Misérables* had had a profound impact on his life.

But in China Hugo's popularity goes far beyond a circle of initiates. He is known, understood, and loved by a large part of the population. When the French film *Notre-Dame de Paris* was shown at the end of the 1970s, there were endless queues outside the cinemas and a televised version of *Marie Tudor* in 1983 was enthusiastically received.

We like Hugo the revolutionary of literature whose *Cromwell* in 1827 was a triumph for the Romantic school and restored liberty to the imagination and to the subject.

We like Hugo the noble fighter, the valiant defender of justice. To fight the tyrant and defend the Republic, he published *Napoléon le Petit, Histoire d'un Crime,* and *Châtiments*. In 1859, he contemptuously refused the amnesty offered by Napoleon III with the declaration: "When liberty returns, so shall I." He would only set foot in Paris again after nineteen years of exile when the Second Empire fell and the Republic was proclaimed.

His loftiness of spirit reminds us of Qu Yuan (340-278 BC), the first great Chinese poet, who died fighting a corrupt and reactionary nobility.

The voice of Victor Hugo spoke out whenever there was oppression in the world. It should not be forgotten that for over a century China was a prey to foreign oppression, a country raped and plundered without being able to put up an effective resistance. Thus *Yuanmingyuan* (the Summer Palace), a marvel of architecture, was sacked and burned by the expeditionary forces of England and France! In those dark ▶

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Ink drawing by Victor Hugo depicts a Chinese figure in front of a kind of temple.

▶ days when the Chinese people seemed to have been abandoned by everyone, from a little island in far-off Europe, from the home of an exile, rose a voice vibrant with justice, to condemn this act of banditism. It was the voice of Victor Hugo (See page 14).

Yes, for us Chinese, the voice of Victor Hugo is the voice of justice. Always on the side of the weak, on the side of those who claimed the right to live, Hugo's magnanimity went so far that he opened his door to the outlaws of the Paris Commune. Several times in the French Senate he called for a "total, generous amnesty, without reservation, without conditions and without restrictions" for the Communards, unafraid of the jeers of reactionary forces athirst for vengeance.

Finally, Hugo is loved in China because of the democratic and humanist ideals which imbue his titanic work. His finest, most powerful, purest pages describe the humble, the wretched, the outcasts, all those who possess true nobility of soul.

Quasimodo, the bell-ringer of Notre-Dame, is monstrously ugly, but his soul is pure and he is good. Esmeralda the gypsy is generous, sensitive, and great-hearted. The convict Jean Valjean, who languished in gaol for stealing bread to feed his starving nephews, displays dauntless courage. He is the symbol of humanity's hope for a juster world. And since he appeared on television, Gavroche, the irrepressible, mischievous Parisian youngster, has become a legendary image of adolescence in China.

Finally, this ardent humanist detested war and was a champion of peace. This is yet another reason why he is so popular with the Chinese people.

Today on the hundredth anniversary of his death, the Chinese people wishes to join the French people and all the peoples of the world in paying him an admiring and grateful tribute.

Victor Hugo will always live among us, in our hearts. ■

LI MEIYING, *of China, is professor of French at the University of Beijing, where she herself was once a pupil before completing her studies at the University of Rennes, France. She has translated several works of famous Chinese writers into French, including* La Maison de Thé *(The Teahouse), by Lao She, and three works by Ba Jin,* La Pluie *(The Rain),* La Brume *(The Mist) and* L'Automne *(Autumn).*

Life and Times of V. H.

1856. Hugo wrote extensive fragments of *Dieu* (God). The collection *Les Contemplations* was published in April and was such a success that Hugo decided to protect himself from further expulsion by becoming a property owner for the first time in his life, when he bought a house at 38 Hauteville Street. The decoration of the house, which was completely designed and supervised by Hugo himself, would take years to complete, but the family was able to move into it in autumn. The exile launched two further appeals by way of encouragement to embryo nations: these were *A l'Italie* and *A la Grèce.*

1857. Hugo devoted himself completely to poetry. Among other things, he wrote several "minor epics", which were subsequently brought together in *La Légende des Siècles, La Révolution* and a good part of *La Pitié Suprême.*

1858. In the hope of finding a husband for her daughter Adèle, Hugo's wife took her to Paris for several months, and from then onwards she was never again to live at Hauteville House on a permanent basis. The poet completed *La Pitié Suprême, Le Verso de la Page* and *L'Ane.* His work on the "minor epics" was interrupted at the end of June by a carbuncle on his back, and he was only able to start working again in early October.

Photo © *Collections de la Maison de Victor-Hugo* —SPADEM.

Hauteville House, Hugo's home in Guernsey, which he bought on 16 May 1856 out of his earnings from* Les Contemplations *and in which he was to live until 1870. Photo shows the façade of the house which looks out over the garden and the sea. On the inside of this vast dwelling Hugo lavished all his talent as an interior decorator, creating what his son Charles described as "a three-storey autograph, rather like a poem with several rooms". At the top can be seen the "look-out" where Hugo worked. Donated to the City of Paris by his descendants in 1927, Hauteville House remains unchanged with its interior as conceived by Hugo virtually intact. It is open to the public from April to October.

The Jean Valjean of writers

by Yevgeny Yevtushenko

THERE are writers without whom the history of literature is inconceivable. There are those without whom history itself is inconceivable. Victor Hugo is among their number.

In his novel *Les Misérables*, there is a significant episode in which Jean Valjean, a former convict known for his prodigious strength, who has carefully concealed his criminal past and made a new life for himself as a "respectable, honest man", witnesses an accident in which a man is trapped under a cart. With a superhuman effort Jean Valjean lifts the cart to release the victim knowing that in doing so he will betray his true identity. If my memory from childhood days, when I read the novel, serves me correctly, it is at this moment that Police Inspector Javert, who for years has been on the track of Valjean, knows that at last he has found his man.

There are similarities between Victor Hugo himself and the hero of his novel. On more than one occasion he had the opportunity of resting comfortably on his laurels, and at such times he skilfully concealed his rebellious nature under a veneer of conventional literary respectability. But the sight of his fellow-men being oppressed, rather than arousing in him the instinct of self-preservation, evoked a noble attitude of protectiveness towards them. As stubborn an inquisitor as Javert, Hugo was a scrupulous, methodical, high-principled professional who did not shrink from plunging into the underworld of Paris in pursuit of an objective. Yet, at the same time, he was always on the side of the hunted, not the hunter. His was a dual, indeed a many-sided nature, capable of encompassing the characters not only of an Esmeralda or a Quasimodo, but of all the curious, teeming fauna of *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Like Jean Valjean, Hugo could not prevent himself from struggling to "lift the cart" even if this might mean being crushed under its weight himself.

In so doing he assumed the burden of history.

Hugo has been accused of being melodramatic and grandiloquent, and there is some truth in this accusation. But we can forgive every excess in return for scenes such as that in which the street-urchin Gavroche falls asleep in the belly of a statue of an elephant. For Hugo was Gavroche as well, drowsing from time to time in the impressive but hollow belly of his fame, knowing, like Gavroche, that his refuge was being nibbled away by mice, yet ready at the first sound of gunfire to leap down and take his place at the barricades. To the end of his days Hugo remained something of a Gavroche, a Paris street-urchin.

When, in his poem *Le Procès à la Révolution* (The Revolution on Trial), taken from his book *L'Année Terrible*, he wrote, *"O juges, vous jugez les crimes de l'aurore* (Judges, you charge the very dawn with crimes), he was defending not only the Revolution but also himself. And in another poem, *Ecrit sur un exemplaire de la Divina Commedia* (Words written on a copy of The Divine Comedy), he wrote:

Puis je fus un lion rêvant dans les déserts
Parlant à la nuit sombre avec sa voix grondante.
Maintenant, je suis homme, et je m'appelle Dante.

(Then I was a lion dreaming in the wilderness
To the dark night growling my complaint.
Now I am a man, and my name is Dante.)

Hugo was, indeed, the Dante of the French Revolution. Not only did the poet in him evoke the romance of the barricades, he also waded, like Jean Valjean, through the bloody, underground sewers of this historic event.

Yes, like the hard-bitten convict who bought a doll for the child Cosette, Hugo was "sentimental". Yet those who condemn others for their sentimentality are usually themselves incomplete beings who lack this great human quality and secretly envy those who possess it. A man who is not sentimental is not truly a man. It is better to be quick to tears than to be incapable of them.

The British essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle is said to have remarked that, like Samson, great men carry on their shoulders the prison doors behind which people wish to enclose them. Hugo was such a man. The snobbish, condescending verdict that dismisses him as no more than a writer for teenagers is, in fact, a compliment. For it is during the years of adolescence that our psychology takes shape and, it must be admitted, that we absorb all that is best in ▶

***Frontispiece drawn by Hugo for his collection of poems* La Légende des Siècles.**

Photo © Bulloz, Paris *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

1859. Hugo went on a two-week visit to the island of Sark with his eldest son and Juliette Drouet, this being the first time that the two had met. In August, he replied to the amnesty decree by issuing a Declaration which he arranged to be printed in the English press and in which he stated: "When freedom returns, so shall I". However, most of the political exiles living in Guernsey returned to France. The first part of *La Légende des Siècles: Histoire - Les Petites Epopées* (History—the Minor Epics) was published in September. Hugo forsook the epic style to write several poems which were included in the collection *Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois*, but then returned to it by taking up *La Fin de Satan*, which he had abandoned five years earlier. He made a public appeal to the United States of America in a bid to save the life of the abolitionist John Brown, who had been sentenced to death.

1860. Hugo wrote to *Le Progrès*, the newspaper of the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince, conveying his hopes for the brotherhood of man, stating: "On earth, there are neither blacks nor whites. There are only minds." He continued to work on *La Fin de Satan* until April, when he returned to *Les Misérables*, a work which he had discarded twelve years before. In June, he returned in triumph to Jersey at the invitation of the Committee set up to support Garibaldi and delivered a speech on freedom and the liberation of Italy. His friend Ribeyrolles, a former parliamentarian and an exile, died in Rio de Janeiro, and Hugo sent the Brazilian Committee an epitaph in verse for his tomb.

Life and Times of V. H.

1861. Hugo grew a beard. In Paris, his brother-in-law Paul Chenay published the engraving "John Brown", which was produced from Hugo's drawing of a hanged man. At the end of March, the writer left Guernsey in the company of Charles and Juliette for a three-month journey on the continent, firstly to Belgium, where he visited his wife and daughter in Brussels, stayed in the vicinity of the battlefield of Waterloo and completed *Les Misérables*. He then went on to Holland. Charles decided to settle on the continent. Hugo wrote three important open letters: one to the Congress of the Antwerp Artistic, Literary and Scientific Circle on literary and artistic property, another to the *Assoziazione Unitaria Italiana* to thank it for having spontaneously made him a member and to encourage it in its work, and the third to Captain Butler, on the sack of the Summer Palace in Beijing. He also ordered a glassed-in room to be built at the top of his house, for use as a study. This was to be his "look-out".

1862. Hugo wrote a letter to the Belgian newspapers on the prisoners condemned to death in Charleroi, and this was instrumental in having seven death sentences commuted. He organized a weekly meal in his home for the poor children of the island. The publication of *Les Misérables* started in Brussels on 30 March and in Paris on 3 April, but the performance of a drama based on the novel by Charles Hugo and Paul Meurice was banned by the French government. In August and September, Hugo travelled with Juliette in Belgium and along the Rhine. Journalists from many countries who were admirers of *Les Misérables* organized a banquet in his honour in Brussels, at which he took the floor to hail the free press and the contribution it had made to social progress. Since he was about to return to Guernsey, Hugo had to decline an invitation to speak at the International Congress for the Advancement of the Social Sciences, but he sent it a letter announcing his membership which was published by the Brussels newspaper *Le Temps* and in which he stated: "There is nothing more pressing and urgent than free and compulsory education". He was also successful in his appeal to the people of Geneva to reject a draft Constitution upholding the death penalty. An *Album* of twelve drawings by Hugo, engraved by Paul Chenay, with a preface by Théophile Gautier and a portrait and foreword by Hugo himself, was published in Paris.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

***Gavroche at the age of eleven, a drawing by Hugo of the archetypal Paris street-urchin who figures in his novel* Les Misérables.**

The Kidnapping of Cosette, *an illustration by Emile-Antoine Bayard (1837-1891) for an edition of* Les Misérables. *Faithful to the promise he has made to her dying mother, Jean Valjean traces Cosette and takes her away from the Thénardier family with which she had been boarded out and where she had been persecuted by both parents and children.*

▶ us. Later we form a shell and lose our receptivity.

There are many outstanding writers who do not awaken in me a sense of my own humanity. This is by no means the case with Hugo. In his poetic masterpiece *Oblako v shtanakh* (A Cloud in trousers), Vladimir Mayakovsky speaks of "the chimeras that haunt Notre-Dame de Paris". At the time when he wrote the poem, Mayakovsky had not visited Paris and his vision of the cathedral was clearly drawn from Victor Hugo. Great art always fathers offspring, and Mayakovsky was one of Hugo's "children". He, too, was a child of the revolution; he, too, like Jean Valjean, felt the invisible shackles of duty around his ankles.

In the last photographs taken of him, Dostoyevsky's face bears the sombre expression of a convict, a Jean Valjean. It is no coincidence that the titles of Hugo's *Les Misérables* and of Dostoyevsky's *The Insulted and Injured* are so similar.

Someone once called the literary profession a "sweet servitude". This may seem a strange description, but it is an accurate one. Hugo bore that servitude with honour. ■

YEVGENY A. YEVTUSHENKO, *of the Soviet Union, is an internationally known poet and writer. His works include* Razvedchiki Gryadushchego (*Outriders of the Future, 1952*), Bratskaya GES *(Bratsk Power Station, 1965), and* Kazansky Universitet *(Kazan University, 1970). He also directed the film* Detsky Sad *(The Kindergarten).*

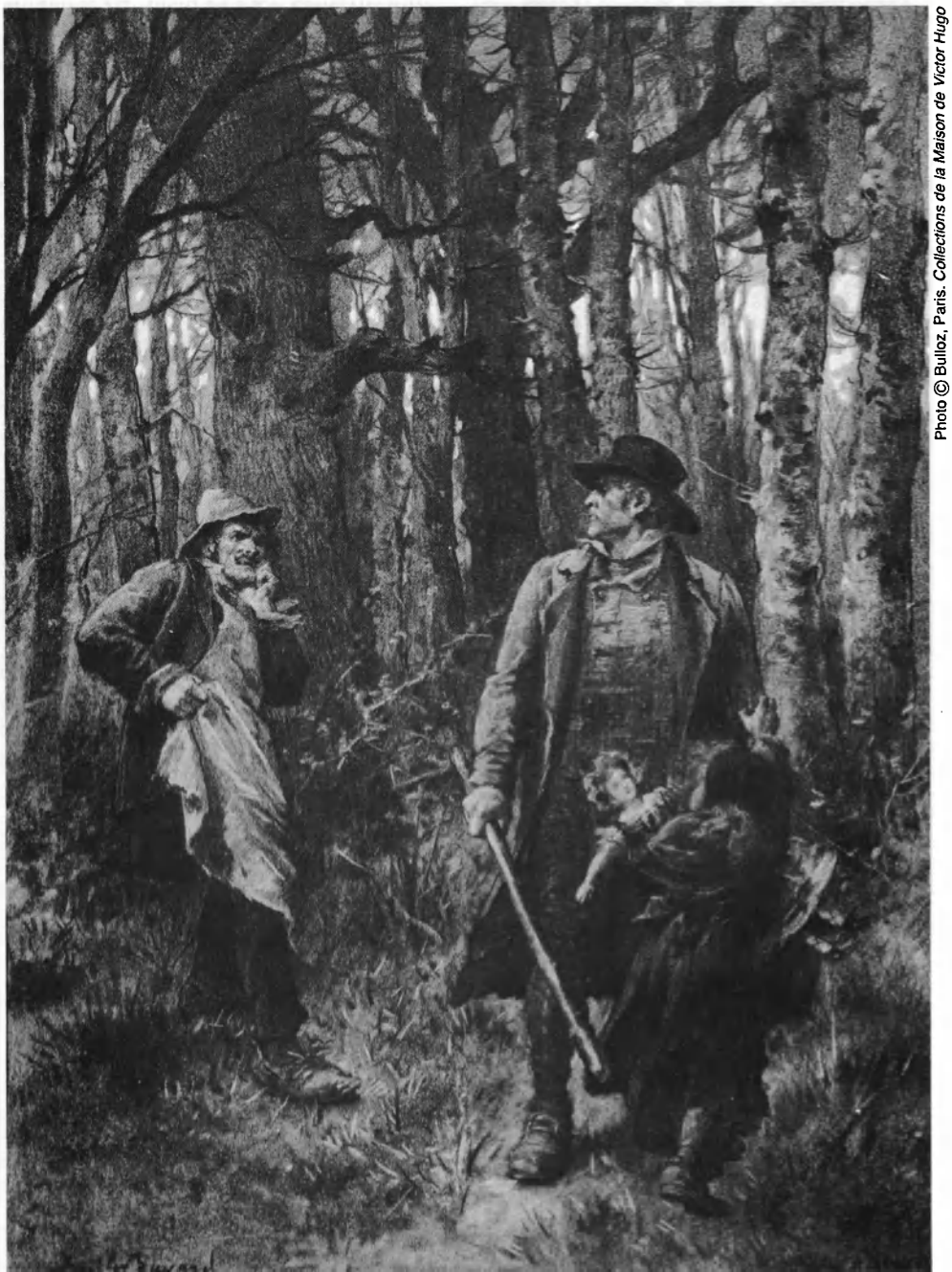


Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

1863. At the beginning of the year, Russia crushed a popular uprising in Poland. Hugo responded to the appeal of the Polish newspaper *Kolokol* by writing an address *A l'Armée Russe* (to the Russian army), which was reproduced in the press throughout Europe. In Puebla, the Mexican city besieged by French troops, a bilingual newspaper published daily "banner" headlines consisting of extracts from *Napoléon le Petit*, and taunted the invaders with the slogan "You have Napoleon but we have Victor Hugo". Hugo responded by writing a stirring essay on The Mexican War. His daughter Adèle fled from the family home and set off for Canada. Hugo's wife published *Victor Hugo Raconté par un Témoin de sa Vie* (Victor Hugo's Life Recounted by an Eyewitness) and came back to Guernsey for ten days. In the summer, Hugo and Juliette went on a seven-week trip to Germany. The writer started to work on a essay on Shakespeare and wrote *Promontorium Somnii.*

1864. Publication of *William Shakespeare*, the crowning genius of all time. Hugo was invited to officiate at a ceremony in Paris commemorating the three-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, and it was agreed that he would be represented by an empty chair. The Imperial government banned the event. Hugo wrote a Preface for the new translation of Shakespeare by François-Victor Hugo and began work on *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* (The Toilers of the Sea). His annual tour took him to Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

13th Year of Absence, Victor Hugo, 1864. ***Probably an example of those drawings that Hugo called his "visiting cards" and which he sent to his friends at Christmas-time.***

Victor Hugo in the Soviet Union

The works of Victor Hugo are highly popular in the Soviet Union, not least because they form part of the compulsory school syllabus. Every pupil knows the poems beginning "Sur une barricade, au milieu..." (*L'Année Terrible*, 1872) and "Demain dès l'aube..." (*Les Contemplations*, 1856), and is acquainted with the episodes featuring Cosette and Gavroche in *Les Misérables* (1862).

Translated into Russian as early as 1862, *Les Misérables* is the most widely read of Hugo's novels and has often been reprinted. Many abridged versions and adaptations have been published, especially since the beginning of the Soviet era, most of them between 30 and 50 pages long and intended for use in schools. The stories of Cosette and Gavroche figure largely in these publications, especially in non-Russian languages. *Les Misérables* has also been illustrated by famous artists such as D.I. Mitrokhin (1923) and Naum Altman (1949).

The other highly popular novels are *Notre-Dame de Paris, Les Travailleurs de la Mer* (translated in 1866, the year it appeared) and *L'Homme qui Rit* (translated in 1869, the year in which it was published in French). The most famous translation of the latter is by the poet Benedikt Livtchitz.

A number of great poets have translated Hugo's poems. They include Fedor I. Tiutchev (1803-1873; an extract from Hugo's 1829 verse drama *Hernani*), and Valeri Briussov (1873-1924; "Ce siècle avait deux ans!..." from *Les Feuilles d'Automne*, 1831, and other poems). "La Grand-Mère" (1829) was translated by Aleksandr A. Blok (1880-1921), and Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) produced a version of "A Léopoldine" (*Les Rayons et les Ombres*, 1840). "Mugitusque Boum" (*Les Contemplations*, 1856) and a large number of other poems were translated by Benedikt Livtchitz. V.A. Rojdestvenski and P.G. Antokolski are two other distinguished translators of Hugo's poetry.

Music has contributed greatly to the popularization of Hugo's work in the Soviet Union. In 1847, Aleksandr S. Dargomizhsky (1813-1869) created *Esmeralda*, an opera which took its title from the name of the gypsy girl in *Les Misérables*, and César Cui's opera *Angelo* (1876) is based on a prose drama by Hugo. Cui (1835-1918), a member of the group of Russian composers known as "the five", also set some of Hugo's poems to music, notably *Vieille Chanson* ("Je ne songeais pas à Rose", in *Les Contemplations*). Among the many other Russian musicians who were inspired by Hugo was Serguei V. Rachmaninov (1873-1943), notably in his song *La Réponse* ("Autre guitare", *Les Rayons et les Ombres*). ■

The above information has been kindly provided by the V.I.Lenin State Library of the USSR, Moscow.

A living presence in Brazil

by José de Souza Rodrigues

IN Brazil, the influence of Victor Hugo was an all-pervading force throughout the nineteenth century. His works attracted the attention of more than a hundred translators, and in the north-eastern province of Maranhao alone, over ten thousand copies of *Les Misérables* were sold. In his book *Victor Hugo in Brazil*, Carneiro Leao states that the works of the French poet became known as early as 1841, through the very first Portuguese translation of the poem *Madame autour de vous*, from the *Feuilles d'Automne*.

Most Brazilian writers were influenced by Hugo, whom they regarded as the champion of freedom of expression and permanent renewal and the architect of social justice. But his most illustrious disciple was undoubtedly the young, romantic poet from Bahia, Antonio de Castro Alves (1847-1871), whose short life was rich in adventure and creative achievement.

His romantic temperament had its roots in childhood. His grandfather, José Antonio da Silva Castro, was a legendary figure in the Bahia region, having led the *Maria Quitéria* battalion in the struggle for independence. Later, his uncle became a fervent actor in the great liberation campaigns. His mulatto nurse, Leopoldina, who had recounted to him the sufferings of the enslaved Blacks, was the source of inspiration for his major work *The Slaves*. Finally, his teacher, Abilio César Borges, sensing his talent, taught him English and French, thus giving him the opportunity to discover the great European poets such as Byron and Hugo.

Of course, Castro Alves was subject to a variety of influences, particularly as far as his poetry was concerned, but none of them was so profound as that of Hugo on the sensitive young poet. Very early on he identified with Hugo, translating many of the latter's longer poems, such as *Chant de Bug-Jargal*, and dedicating many of his works to him.

The main principles of romantic drama as defined by Hugo are to be found in Castro Alves' dramatic works, especially in *Gonzaga, or the Revolution at Minas*, a prose drama inspired by the independence campaigns supported by poets in the eighteenth century. This play, now of purely historical interest, was a decisive landmark in the history of the Brazilian theatre. If we recall that prior to it there was no solid theatrical tradition in Brazil, we can recognize the importance of Hugo's contribution in a domain which continued to grow and flourish from the nineteenth century onwards. Once more Hugo brought rejuvenation and renewal.

This innovatory force also influenced Brazilian poetry, to which Hugo made a decisive contribution with regard to form. His style, full of imaginative daring, unexpected metaphors and visual evocations, and the verbal magnetism of a poetry of cosmic range, which upset all the classical norms, are at the root of a trend in literature whose most outstanding representative Castro Alves was. The historian Capistrano de Abreu called it "condorism", after the condor, the great South American bird that can soar to the highest peaks of the Andes.

The "condorism" of Castro Alves takes shape in his great poetic fresco *The Slaves*, a fierce diatribe against the enslavement of the Blacks in Brazil. *The Slave Ship*, one of the poems from this lengthy, passionately committed work, was enthusiastically applauded when the author recited it at the Literary Lyceum on 7 September 1868. Hugo's influence is clearly present in its atmosphere of unbridled imagination, powerful idealization and plastic grandeur. Thanks to the active engagement of the young romantic poet from Bahia, there was an upsurge of support for the abolitionist cause.

A Dantean vision...on the deck
Bodies lie red under the lanterns.
Bloodstained light...
The crack of the whip and the clanking of chains...

A mass of bodies black as the night
Seethe in a macabre dance...

Raising the starving mouth to her nipple,
The mother feeds the black child
With the blood of her poor veins.
Naked frightened girls,
Borne along by the monstrous crowd,
Bewail in vain their sorrows.

Like Hugo, the defender of the poverty-stricken and the unfortunate, Castro Alves became the spokesman of the revolutionary ideas of his generation. In his poem *The Century*, following in the footsteps of his French mentor, he evoked the great causes that engrossed the thinkers of his time (Victor Hugo's exile was one of these), directly echoing the universal humanism of the poet of Guernsey.

Photo taken from *Victor Hugo, Dessins et Lavis* © Editions Hervas, Paris

Life and Times of V. H.

1865. Death of Emily de Putron, François-Victor's fiancée. François-Victor left Guernsey and his father delivered the funeral oration. Hugo made several declarations on capital punishment and agreed to be a member of a Committee established for the purpose of erecting a statue to Beccaria in Italy. He wrote a letter to the *Gonfaloniere* of Florence to commemorate the six-hundredth anniversary of Dante. In June, he wrote *La Grand-Mère*, a one act comedy, and then left with Juliette for four months on the continent. He wrote a letter to the Students' Congress of Liège, in which he stated that the brotherhood of education was the precursor of the brotherhood of peoples. *The Chansons des Rues et des Bois* was published in both Brussels and Paris. He completed *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. Charles Hugo married Alice Lehaene.

1866. Publication of *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. The novel was dedicated to Guernsey, "my present retreat and my likely grave". Hugo wrote a drama entitled *Mille Francs de Récompense* (One thousand francs reward) and a one-act comedy, *L'Intervention*. In Brussels, where he lived for two months in the summer and met his wife and sons again, Hugo started work on a new novel *L'Homme qui Rit* (The Laughing Man) and on the introduction to *Paris-Guide*, a collection of essays intended for publication on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition. Published an open letter in response to the appeal launched by the inhabitants of Crete, who had risen up against the Turks. He also became an honorary member of the Central Committee for the Polish Cause.

1867. He issued a further letter to the people of Crete, as well as a letter to England on the Irish independence movement. He also wrote a two-act comedy *Mangeront-ils?* (Will they eat?) and published his essay on Paris, in which he extolled its history and conjured up a majestic vision of its future whereby, in the twentieth century, it would become the capital of a united Europe and, in the centuries thereafter, the capital of united mankind. He addressed an appeal to Benito Juarez, President of the Mexican Republic, asking him to spare the life of the Emperor Maximilian "by the grace of the Republic". He had a moving exchange of letters with a Portuguese correspondent on the occasion of the abolition of the death penalty in Portugal. Their correspondence was published in *Le Courrier de l'Europe*. He addressed a letter to the Con-

This head of a terror-stricken man is one of a series of drawings by Hugo dating from around 1864 to 1869.

gress of the Peace League taking place in Geneva. He spent three months on the continent, firstly with his family in Brussels, where he saw his first grandson Georges, and then in Zeeland. Publication in booklet form of *La Voix de Guernesey*, a set of verses addressed to Garibaldi on the occasion of his defeat at Mentana. He likewise addressed a letter *Aux Membres de la République de Puerto Rico*, in which he proclaimed: "The freedom of the world is composed of the freedom of its individual peoples".

1868. Hugo addressed a letter to the International League of Peace and Freedom, which was published in the Washington newspaper *Public Opinion*, as well as a letter to the Venetian patriots on Manin, whose ashes were about to be transferred from London to Venice. Death of Georges Hugo. Hugo spent two months in Brussels. Birth of his second grandson, also named Georges. Death of Hugo's wife. Hugo accompanied the funeral cortège as far as the French border. He completed *L'Homme qui Rit* and addressed two letters to Spain, following the fall of that country's monarchy.

1869. Hugo wrote *L'Epée, Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus* and *Torquemada* for a future collection of *Théâtre en Liberté*. He launched an *Appel à L'Amérique* calling on it to support Crete and visited Geneva to chair the Congress of the International League of Peace and Freedom. He spent several weeks travelling in Switzerland and one month in Brussels, where a grand-daughter, Jeanne, had just been born. Publication of *L'Homme qui Rit*. Letter to the Chairman of the American Committee of London on the philanthropist George Peabody. His poetic output stepped up sharply.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Frontispiece by Achille Devéria for an edition of the second version of Hugo's novel* Bug-Jargal *(1826).

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Illustration by Georges Rochegrosse (1859-1938) of a key episode in Hugo's novel* L'Homme qui Rit *(The Laughing Man, 1869). In the House of Peers, the hero, Gwynplaine, disfigured in childhood by gypsies who extended his mouth so that he seemed to wear a perpetual grin, denounces social injustices, under the mocking glances of his fellow peers.

This mimesis becomes more understandable when it is recalled that, from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Brazil, especially in the political and legal fields, was experiencing the growing pains of a young society. There was intense, countrywide awareness of questions of national importance, such as the fight for independence, the emancipation of slaves, the war with Paraguay, the sovereignty of the people and the equality of nations.

Most young people saw in Hugo—the elected representative of the people, the Deputy of Paris—a guide and a prophet, the defender of freedom and the apostle of justice. His speeches in the National Assembly and his humanist discourses aroused enormous interest.

Victor Hugo's name is for ever associated with the fight that has been waged in Brazil since the last century for the emancipation of man and for equal rights. His is still a living presence there. ■

JOSE DE SOUZA RODRIGUES, *of Brazil, is an attaché at his country's Permanent Delegation to Unesco. Formerly a professor at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro and Brazilian cultural attaché in Peru, he is the author of a number of works including* Concretismo *(1978), an essay on visual poetry in Brazil, and* El Grabado en el Brazil: Grabadores Populares *(1978), a study of the popular art of engraving in Brazil.*

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Victor Hugo and the Young Republic, *a lithograph dating from 1893 by the French artist Adolphe Léon Willette (1857-1926). This portrayal of Hugo/Jean Valjean as the adoptive father of the young Republic/ Cosette is typical of the image of Hugo propagated by the Third Republic and demonstrates the popularity of the character Cosette, taken as the incarnation of childhood.*

Life and Times of V. H.

1870. Hugo responded to the appeals made to him from across the Atlantic by delivering an address *Pour Cuba* and a letter *To the Women of Cuba* who had taken refuge in New York. He continued his poetic activity and planned the organization of the collection *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit.* In June, his son Charles and family came to stay at Hauteville House. In view of the impending fall of the Empire, Hugo left Guernsey with Juliette on 15 August and went to Brussels, where he impatiently awaited the news from Paris. The Republic was proclaimed on 4 September and, on the 5th, Hugo returned to France after almost nineteen years of exile. No sooner had he returned than he turned his attack on the foreign enemy. He addressed a letter *Aux Allemands* (To the Germans), followed by letters to the French people and to the Parisians. Publication of the first French edition of *Les Châtiments*, from which public readings were given in aid of the defence of Paris. Other public readings were given in aid of war victims. *L'Année Terrible* began to take shape in the light of these events.

1871. The French and the Germans signed an armistice in January and legislative elections were held in February. Hugo was elected to the National Assembly and set off at once for Bordeaux, where it was in session. Three weeks later, when he spoke in a debate on the validation of Garibaldi's election, he was so violently heckled that he resigned. His son Charles' sudden death compelled him to return to Paris on the very day that the uprising of the Commune broke out. He went on to Brussels to arrange his son's affairs. His horror at the harsh repression of which the "Communards" were victims prompted him to offer sanctuary to all the exiles of the Commune. On account of the stand he took, he was attacked in his home in the night and was expelled from Belgian territory. He and his entourage sought refuge in Luxembourg, after which he settled in Vianden. The poems com-

A visit from an Emperor

"... This man who is more than a prince, since he is an intellect." Thus, in a letter of 1877, Victor Hugo described Pedro II, the second and last emperor of Brazil, who was a friend and ardent admirer of his work.

A cultured man and a thinker formed by the French intellectual tradition, Dom Pedro de Alcantara (1825-1891) ruled Brazil for almost half a century (1840-1889) during which the country experienced considerable social and economic progress, notably the abolition of slavery in 1888.

Pedro II considered Hugo, whom he began to read at a very early age, to be the greatest living French writer, and Hugo had a high regard for both the intellectual personality and the political liberalism of this enlightened monarch, during whose reign Brazil was a haven for a large number of French exiles.

On the death of one of these exiles, Charles Ribeyrolles, Hugo sent his friends in Brazil a message from Guernsey in which he wrote: "You are men of noble sentiments and a generous nation. You have the twofold advantage of a virgin land and an ancient race..."

Pedro II often visited Paris. On 22 May 1877, ten days after the publication of *L'Art d'Etre Grand-père*, a collection of poems partly inspired by his affection for his two grand-children, Georges and Jeanne, Hugo was visited by the emperor. His account of the meeting appears in *Choses Vues*, a collection of prose writings published posthumously. Here is an extract:

"—Talking of kings and emperors, he speaks of: *my colleagues.*—At one point he said: *my rights....* He corrected himself. *I have no rights, I only have power as a result of chance. I must use it for good. Progress and liberty!*

"When Jeanne entered, he said to me: *I have an ambition. Please introduce me to Mlle Jeanne.*

"I said to Jeanne: *Jeanne, I introduce you to the emperor of Brazil.*

"Jeanne simply said under her breath: —*He is not wearing a suit.* The emperor said to her: *Kiss me, mademoiselle.* She offered her cheek. He continued: *But Jeanne, throw your arms around my neck.*

"(...) He talked to me with such gravity and intelligence that when we parted, I said to him: *Sir, you are a great citizen.*

"Another detail. When I introduced Georges to him, I said: *Sir, I present my grandson to your majesty.* He said to Georges: *My child, there is only one majesty here, and that is Victor Hugo.*" ■

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Victor Hugo and his grandchildren, Georges and Jeanne, photographed in 1881 by A. Melandri. Their father, Charles Hugo (1826-1871), the poet's elder son, married Alice Lehaene in Brussels in 1865.

prising *L'Année Terrible* continued to increase in number. At the end of September, on learning of the conviction of Henri de Rochefort, Hugo rushed back to Paris to plead in his favour and in that of other Communards.

1872. Adèle, Hugo's daughter, had gone out of her mind and was brought back to Paris, where she had to be placed in a nursing home. She was to die in 1915. Publication of a collection of speeches and open letters entitled *Actes et Paroles 1870-1872*, followed by publication of *L'Année Terrible*. In May, the people of Rome sent an address to the people of France, through the person of Victor Hugo who, in turn, drafted a *Réponse aux Romains* (Reply to the Romans). He also sent letters to the Chairman of the Society of Non-denominational Schools and to the Chief Editor of *Avenir des Femmes* (The Future of Women), in order to encourage them in their work. He likewise addressed a letter on the *Future of Europe* to the Peace Congress in Lugano. Hugo returned to Guernsey and started work on a new novel, *Quatrevingt-treize* (Ninety-Three).

1873. While still in Guernsey, Hugo became friendly with Blanche Lanvin, a girl working for Juliette. This was to be the last great love affair of his life and was to last for a number of years. He wrote poems, completed a first version of his novel and then, having spent almost one year on the island, returned to France. Death of his son, François-Victor, in December.

1874. Publication of *Quatrevingt-Treize*. Completion and publication of *Mes Fils*. Letter on the *Centenaire de Pétrarque* (The five-hundredth anniversary of Petrarch). Letter to the Peace Congress meeting in Geneva. Letter to the Italian democrats. Prolific poetic output.

Photo © *Musées de la Ville de Paris-SPADEM*, 1985

Drawing by Hugo of a woman naked under a cloak and wearing a feathered hat.

At home with Hugo

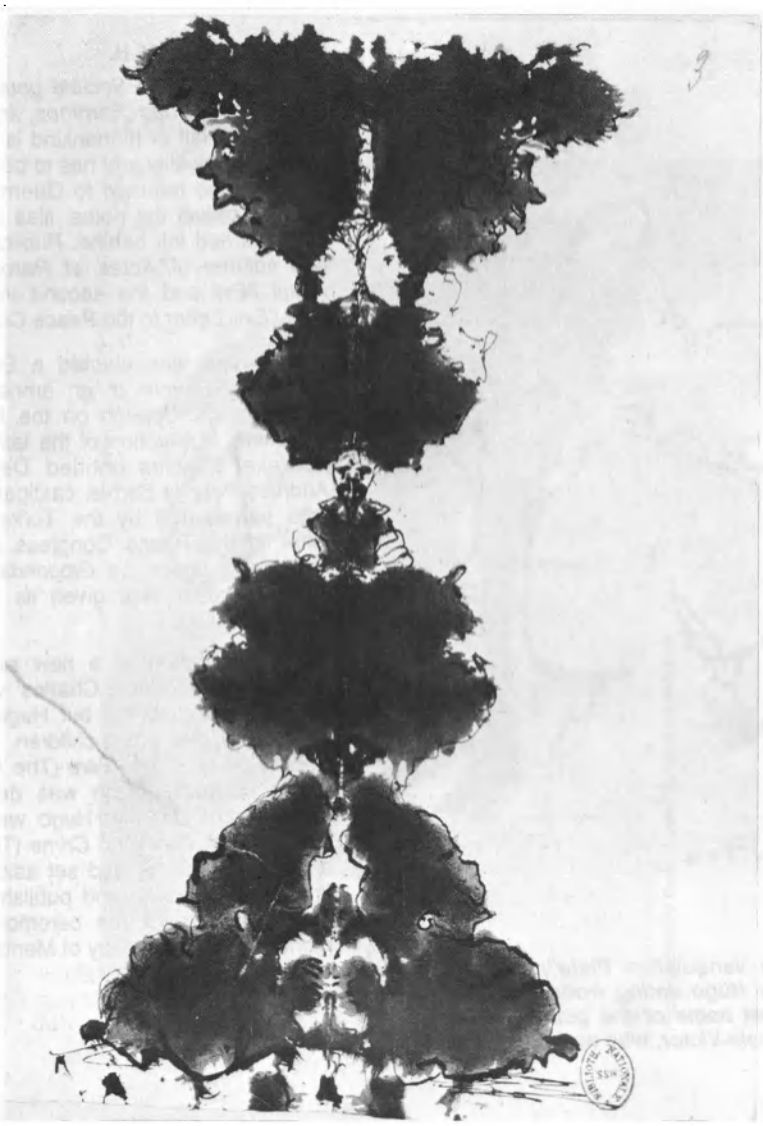


Photo © Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Département des Manuscrits

by Rubén Darío

I recently paid a visit to the Victor Hugo museum, wondering whether I should find any of the faithful at the shrine. The museum is located in the house in the *Place des Vosges*, Paris, in which the great man used to live. It is well known that the museum was assembled thanks chiefly to the unswerving esteem, love and admiration of Victor Hugo's friend and disciple Paul Meurice, who tackled this labour of love with wholehearted enthusiasm. His painstaking attention to detail was pushed to such lengths as to arouse criticism in certain quarters for such exhibits as "a molar that Victor Hugo had extracted on such and such a date". For my part, I have never seen this famous molar.

In the entrance hall there is a bust of the great poet. The staircase is lined with pictures depicting scenes from his plays, poems and novels as well as from his life. Farther on are many illustrations by Rochegrosse, Boulanger, J.P. Laurens, and others, and then photographs, caricatures and all the pictorial Hugoliana, ranging from the earliest days, from childhood to death-bed, to ▶

Retouched inkstain on folded paper by Victor Hugo, dating from around 1850. The symmetrical inkstain obtained by folding the leaf of paper was later imaginatively retouched by the pen. In the centre is the bust of a figure and, above, two adjoining profile heads. Hugo practiced this "inkstain art" before he went into exile and continued to do so until the end of his life.

the fine head photographed by Nadar and painted by Bonnat under the lights of the mortuary. There are show-cases with the usual exhibits; academic robes, the robes of a nobleman of France, a cap, a fine walking-stick in a case on which can be seen the inscription *Benito Juárez à l'illustre Victor Hugo.*

There are medals and quills, and letters addressed to the poet bearing the signatures of famous personalities. There is a morsel of siege-bread, and, in a box, four large locks of hair which cover, as it were, the spectrum of his life.

The fair hair of his days at the "College of the Nobles", in Madrid; the tresses of the "golden boy" of Paris; the darker locks of the author of *Hernani*, of the young and brilliant pioneer of Romanticism; the grey hairs of the fighter, of the stormy outbursts of the Chamber of Deputies and of political agitation; the grey-head of *L'Année Terrible* and of *Les Châtiments*; the silver locks of Guernsey and of *L'Art d'Etre Grand-père*; the venerated, white hairs of the ancient, of the high priest of the lyric world, of the revered patriarch of thinkers, whose death shook the world and over whose mortal remains all Paris stood vigil in that most grandiose of all catafalques—the *Arc de Triomphe.*

On a small table stand four ink-wells and four quills—those of Lamartine, of Dumas senior, of George Sand and of the master of the house himself. Hugo delighted in making strange objects with his own hands and used to construct "Chinese" and "Japanese" artefacts well before the Goncourt brothers launched the oriental fashion. The museum contains a mantelpiece decorated by Hugo in the oriental style as well as several panels skilfully coloured and gilded by him in picturesque style.

There are whimsical mandarins, Chinese scenes, fantastic animals, outrageous dragons, comic characters from the Celestial Empire, rare flowers, gaming boards decorated with lines and patterns, some multicoloured and apparently in poker-work, most of them of much interest and inventiveness. There are paintings and portraits, and more paintings and more portraits. But what, above all, attracts the eye and demands attention is the pictorial work of Hugo.

The day that an artist-thinker writes a book that brings out the true value of the graphic creativity of the finest French poet we shall have a profoundly important addition to our libraries.

For it is in his drawings, in Victor Hugo the painter, that the extraordinary personality of the great and prophetic poet finds completion. Only in Turner, in Blake and in some of Piranesi's works can be found the wealth of fantasy and mystery, of eternal and transcendent "Romanticism" with which Hugo's drawings are imbued. Ruins, fantastic palaces, splendid eastern buildings straight from the pages of *The Thousand and One Nights*, curious constructions like symbolic pyramids, baleful skies, unreal moonlight, night terrors, twisted shadows and bright bursts of light, magical architectures, resurrections of the past and foretastes of the future, the world of fantasy, nightmares, horror, the grotesque, the arabesque, the hidden face of art, all are to be found in the pictorial work of the great man. So vast is the cathedral-like façade of his literary work that we fail to notice the volutes and whorls it was his delight to conjure from his pen in leisure ▶

This Chinese dining room was designed and created by Victor Hugo for Hauteville Fairy, Juliette Drouet's house on Guernsey, the decoration of which he supervised. The softwood panels were pyrographed and painted by Hugo. This décor occupies what was formerly the grand salon of the house in the Place des Vosges, Paris, where the writer lived from 1832 to 1848. In 1903, as a result of efforts by Hugo's close friend, the poet Paul Meurice (1820-1905), the house became a museum dedicated to Hugo's life and work.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo.*

"Toto vanquishes Pista", a drawing by Victor Hugo dating from 1832. Toto was the pet name of the poet's younger son François-Victor, who was born in 1828.

Life and Times of V. H.

1875. Letter to the *Société pour l'Amélioration du Sort des Femmes,* in which he asserted: "Half of humankind is beyond the bounds of equality and has to be gathered in again". Hugo returned to Guernsey for one week to collect the notes, files and manuscripts he had left behind. Publication of the first volume of *Actes et Paroles* entitled *Avant l'Exil* and the second volume *Pendant l'Exil.* Letter to the Peace Congress.

1876. Hugo was elected a Senator and militated in favour of an amnesty for the Communards. Speech on the Philadelphia Exhibition. Publication of the last volume of *Actes et Paroles* entitled *Depuis l'Exil.* Address *Pour la Serbie,* castigating massacres perpetrated by the Turks. A further letter to the Peace Congress in Geneva. Ponchielli's opera, *La Gioconda,* based on Hugo's *Angelo,* was given its first performance in Milan.

1877. Publication of a new series of *La Légende des Siècles.* Charles' widow married Edouard Lockroy, but Hugo continued to live with his grand-children. Publication of *L'Art d'Etre Grand-Père* (The Art of being a Grandfather), which was dedicated to Georges and Jeanne. Hugo went back to work on *L'Histoire d'un Crime* (The Story of a Crime), which he had set aside since he first went into exile, and published the first volume. Letter for the ceremony commemorating the anniversary of Mentana.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo*

Photo © *Editions Paris Musées/Bibliothèque Nationale*

1878. Publication of the second volume of *L'Histoire d'un Crime.* Publication of *Le Pape* (The Pope). Address on the hundredth anniversary of the death of Voltaire. Hugo attended the International Literary Congress, at which he made several statements, including the opening address and a speech on literary property. At the end of June, the poet suffered a cerebral haemorrhage, which virtually brought his creative work to an end. He spent four months resting in Guernsey with his family.

1879. Publication of *La Pitié Suprême.* Further statements on behalf of the Communards, as a result of which a partial amnesty was granted. In May, Hugo presided over a banquet commemorating the abolition of slavery and delivered a speech on Africa. He visited Villequier to meditate on the graves of Léopoldine and his wife.

1880. Publication of *Religions et Religion.* Speech for the three-hundredth anniversary of Camoens. A further speech before the Senate in favour of a total amnesty, which was finally accorded. In August, he chaired a ceremony commemorating the *Société pour l'Instruction Elémentaire* (Society for Elementary Education) and made a speech on elementary education that was particularly favourable to non-denominational schools. Publication of *L'Ane.*

Drawing of a donkey by Hugo above which he has written these words:* "Ah çà! décidément, que se passe-t-il après la mort?" *(Ah! Yes indeed! What does happen after death?). in his 3,000-line poem* L'Ane *(1880), Hugo puts philosophy and the sciences under the microscope.

▶ moments. To obtain his strange effects he used as ink anything that came within reach of his capable acquisitive hand—charcoal, coffee, milky coffee, soot from a burnt wick.

Farther on can be seen the bed in which he died, two portraits of his grandchildren on the nearby mantelpiece, and the desk at which, an early-riser, he used to work each morning standing up. One senses an aura of greatness.

There are not many visitors—one or two foreigners; a father telling his son in a low voice about the various objects and documents, a few workmen, for it is a Sunday, and two artists, Germans by the look of them, making sketches in the room with the drawings.

Coming out of the bedroom, I saw on a table, under a sheet of glass, a paper on which the poet affirmed his adhesion to a political party that had yet to come into being, but which, he asserted, would be formed in the twentieth century, a party which would give birth first to the United States of Europe and then to the United States of the World. This notion is more fully developed in lengthy paragraphs in a number of his works, especially in his writings on Paris. It should not be forgotten that, rather than "The Thinker", Hugo was "The Great Dreamer". ■

RUBEN DARIO *is the pseudonym of the Nicaraguan poet, journalist and diplomat Félix Rubén García Sarmiento (1867-1916). The leader of the "modernist" movement in Latin American literature, he is considered one of the leading writers in the Spanish language. His works include* Azul *(Blue, 1888) and* Cantos de Vida y Esperanza *(Songs of Life and Hope, 1905). He travelled widely, sending back a series of brilliant articles to the Buenos Aires newspaper* La Nación. *A collection of his articles was published in 1906 in a book entitled* Opiniones, *from which this text is taken. He lived in Paris almost uninterruptedly from 1900 to 1914 and was greatly influenced by Victor Hugo.*

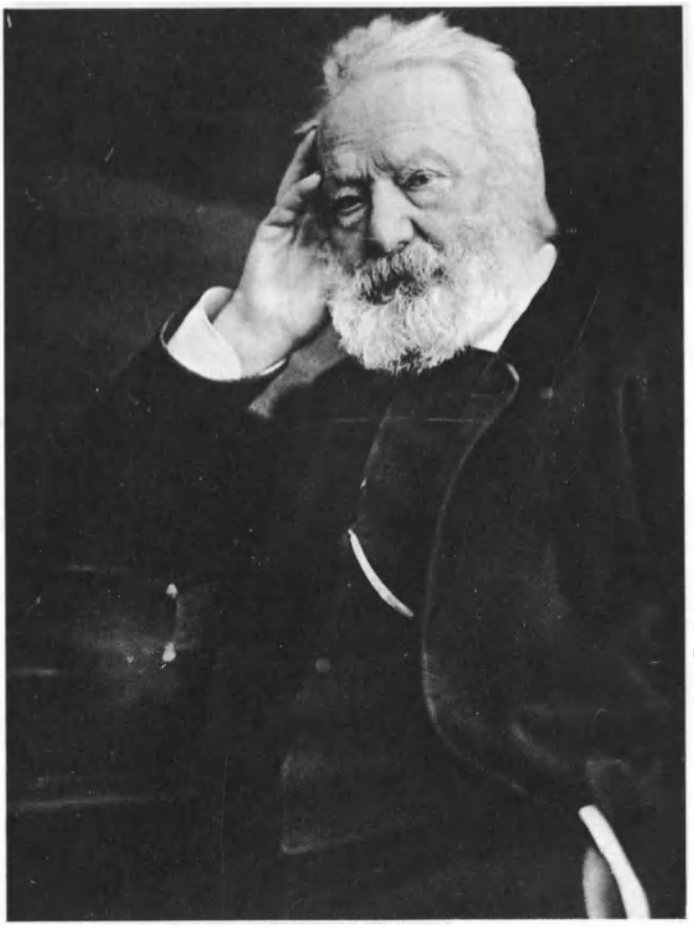


Photo © City of Paris Victor Hugo Exhibition, 1985

Victor Hugo photographed in 1878 by Nadar (the pseudonym of the French photographer artist and writer Félix Tournachon, 1820-1910).

Photo © City of Paris Victor Hugo Exhibition, 1985

An immense crowd kept vigil over the catafalque erected at the Arc de Triomphe for the poet's state funeral on 1 June 1885. Delegations from many countries followed his coffin which, in accordance with Hugo's wishes, was carried to the Pantheon where he is buried, on a pauper's hearse.

Life and Times of V. H.

1881. Hugo's seventy-ninth birthday was the subject of a grand popular celebration. On the following day, hundreds of thousands of people filed past his house. Publication of *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit.* Hugo attended the first performance of a theatrical adaptation of *Quatrevingt-Treize* by Paul Meurice.

1882. Publication of *Torquemada.* Hugo took his last important stand when, in June, the newspaper *Le Rappel* published his address on the Jews and Russia, dealing with the anti-semitic persecutions that had recently occurred.

1883. Death of Juliette Drouet. Publication of an additional series of *Les Contemplations.* In the summer, Victor Hugo travelled to Switzerland with his daughter-in-law and grandchildren. Publication of *L'Archipel de la Manche* (The Archipelago of the English Channel) which had originally been intended as a preface to *Les Travailleurs de la Mer.* This was the last work to be published by Hugo in his lifetime.

1884. In March, Hugo wrote a brief address to celebrate the abolition of slavery in one of the provinces of Brazil. In April, he addressed a letter to the banquet commemorating the anniversary of Greek independence. In May, Hugo attended the concert at which Saint-Saëns conducted his *Hymne à Victor Hugo.* In September, at Veules-les-Roses, he saw the sea for the last time. In November, he visited Bartholdi's workshop, where he saw the *Statue of Liberty Illuminating the World,* which was to be installed later in New York.

1885. Death of Victor Hugo on 22 May, after a short illness. He was given a State funeral. He left behind him a vast amount of unpublished work, most of which has now (one hundred years later) been published. ■

EVELYN BLEWER, *of the United States, specializes in the study of Victor Hugo and his works. A graduate of Yale University, she has also studied in France. She has edited a selection of letters from Juliette Drouet to Victor Hugo, published in 1985 under the title* Lettres à Victor Hugo, *and, in collaboration with Jean Gaudon, Hugo's* La Fin de Satan *(1984).*

Caramba!

by Severo Sarduy

OF Victor Hugo what endures beyond a name bracketed between two dates, two bisyllabic praenomina click-clacking like a baby's rattle or like tiny cymbals in the hands of a derisive deity? What remains of the *enfant sublime*, the golden boy with the quizzical look and the impeccable silk waistcoat, or of the Homeric patriarch dandling on his knee two chubby-cheeked children stiff as mechanical dolls?

Technical mastery? The greatest books are not necessarily those that contain the most spectacular writing. Technical virtuosity is not a highly rated commodity today.

A humanistic, libertarian approach? Today power is but an effect of language—as we all know, national anthems have been written that draw on the very vocabulary that Hugo used, laced, of course, with other ingredients, that are worthy of the comic operatics of the *zarzuela*, strident background music to drown the screams of the tortured.

Upon reflection, one thing endures—not technical prowess, not lyrical power, but the almost tangible vigour of revolt, the carnal violence of provocation.

For Hugo's grandiloquence is akin to anger, to blasphemy, to the climactic coital cry. Language becomes flesh (sparkle gives way to an abrasiveness that matches that of Paul Claudel), idealist babblings become trenchant talk (a ferocious torrent worthy of Céline) and the lusty thrust of history impregnates the text. True, Victor Hugo nourished the fine sentiments of a whole generation of the bourgeoisie; but it is also true that his words were a liberating, disillusioning leaven, like those of Lucretius, eating away at what it seemed to sustain.

Such subversive force no longer exists. We are all, without exception, moribund, managerial, institutionalized writers.

Caramba! What a pity! ■

SEVERO SARDUY, *a Cuban writer who lives in France, is the author of a number of novels, poems and essays. His works include* Cobra *(1972) and* Barroco *(Baroque, 1972). A new novel* Colibri *(Humming-bird) is to be published in 1986.*

Drawing and caption by Victor Hugo. The caption reads: "Downgraded bird whose cacklings have compromised the witch."

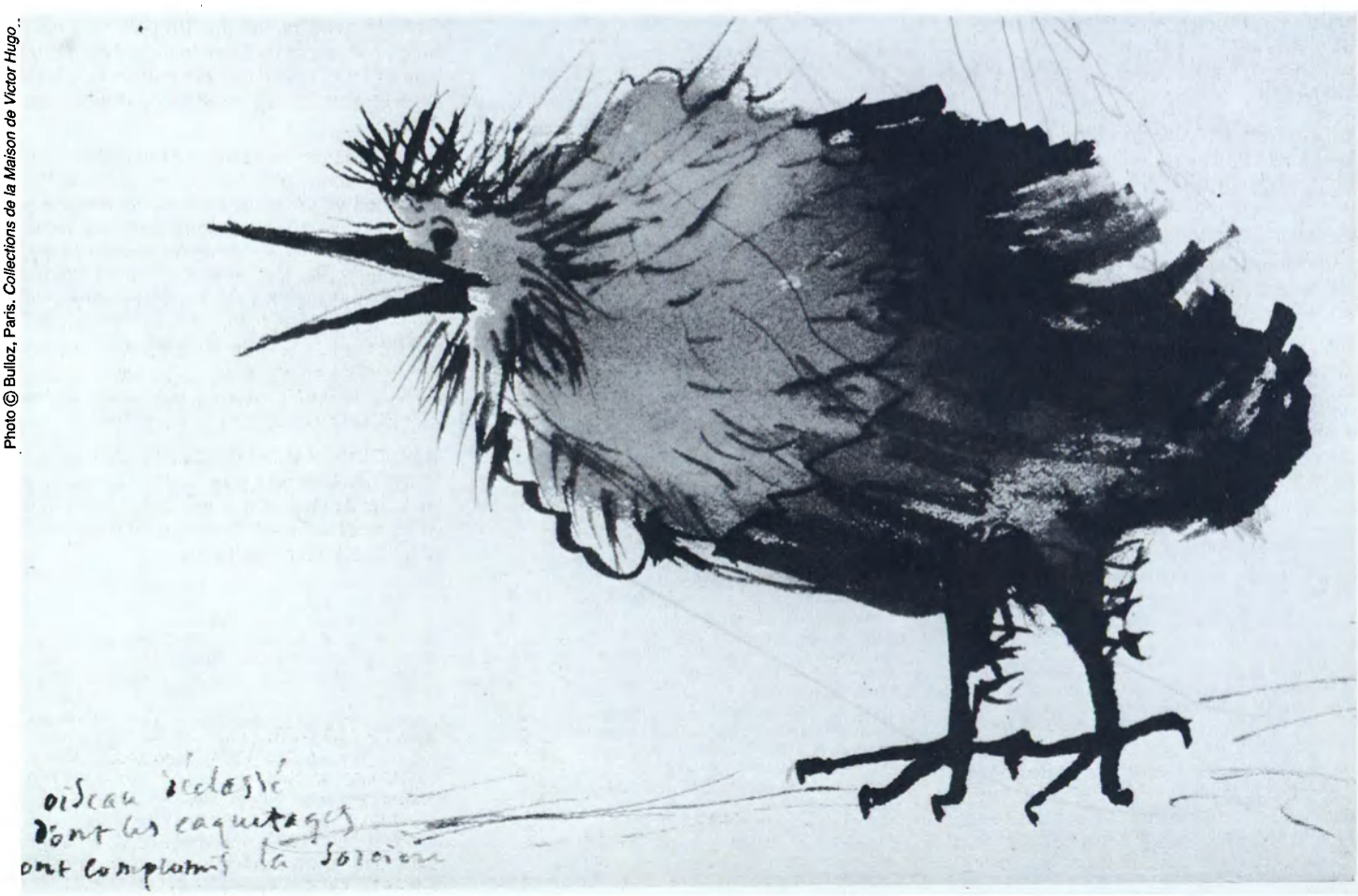


Photo © Bulloz, Paris. *Collections de la Maison de Victor Hugo.*

Further Reading on Victor Hugo

In English

Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel
by Victor Brombert
Harvard University Press, 1984.

Victor Hugo
by André Maurois
Arden Library, Arden, Pennsylvania, 1984. (Reprint of 1956 edition)

Victor Hugo: A Realistic Biography of the Great Romantic
by Matthew Josephson
Telegraph Books, Norwood, Pennsylvania, 1982. (Reprint of 1942 edition).

In French

Victor Hugo, Dessins et Lavis
by Jacqueline Lafrague
Editions Hervas, Paris, 1983

Victor Hugo
Poèmes choisis et présentés par Jean Gaudon
Editions Flammarion, Paris, 1985

Lettres de Juliette Drouet à Victor Hugo, 1833-1882
Text established and annotated by Evelyn Blewer. Preface by Jean Gaudon
HAR/PO, Paris, 1985

Victor Hugo
by Alain Decaux
Editions Perrin, Paris, 1984.

L'Extraordinaire Métamorphose ou 5 ans dans la vie de Victor Hugo
by Jean-François Kahn
Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1984.

Hugo l'Homme des Misérables
by Jean-Louis Cornuz
Editions Pierre-Marcel Favre, Paris/Lausanne, 1985.

In October 1985 the first ten volumes of a new edition of the complete works of Victor Hugo were published by Robert Laffont publishers, Paris, in their "Bouquins" collection. Further volumes in this edition, prepared from the original manuscripts under the direction of Jacques Seebacher, will appear in 1986. Among the many events marking the centenary of Victor Hugo's death, three important exhibitions are being held in Paris during the autumn and winter 1985-1986. *La Gloire de Victor Hugo* at the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais (3 October 1985-6 January 1986) presents a mass of documents illustrating the impact of Hugo, his work and his myth during his time and since. *Soleil d'Encre*, an exhibition of about a hundred original manuscripts and over 300 drawings can be seen at the Petit Palais from 3 October 1985 until 5 January 1986. An exhibition on *Victor Hugo et la Photographie* is being held at the Musée d'Art et d'Essai-Palais de Tokyo from 22 November.

Unesco issues Victor Hugo medal

To mark the centenary of Victor Hugo's death, Unesco has issued a medal designed by the French artist Louisette-Jeanne Courroy and struck at the Paris Mint.

The medal, which is available in gold, silver, and bronze, depicts on its obverse side a portrait of Victor Hugo at the age of 50, with the inscription "V. Hugo 1802-1885 Unesco 1985." The reverse side shows a storm-swept tree and the inscription "C'est par la fraternité qu'on sauve la liberté" ("Fraternity is the saviour of liberty"), a declaration made by Hugo when he returned to Paris from exile in 1870.

For further information about how to obtain the Victor Hugo medal and others issued in Unesco's series commemorating the anniversaries of great figures of the past, please write to Unesco's Philatelic and Numismatic Programme, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris.

Photo © Baptiste Paul Grimaud, Paris

This set of cards produced on the occasion of the centenary is inspired by Victor Hugo's novels. It has been designed and produced by Dominique Asselot on the basis of an idea by Lila Oppenheim and printed by Baptiste Paul Grimaud, card manufacturers in Paris since 1848.

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